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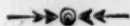
*RESTLESS MATRON.*

REGISTER

TEST



THE  
RESTLESS MATRON.



A  
*LEGENDARY TALE.*

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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“ My heart quakes in me : in your settled face,  
“ And clouded brow, methinks I see my fate.”

OTWAY.

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VOL. I.

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THE  
RESTLESS MATRON.

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L I N A.

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IN one of the beautiful vallies of Switzerland, where Nature has lavished her various bounties with a profuse and liberal hand—where a new creation presents itself each moment to the wondering eye, and recalls to the mind the Paradise our first parents inhabited, sat the young and beautiful Countess of Pfyr, whom we will introduce

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to

to our readers by the name of Lina, which was her usual appellation.

Lina was seated by the side of the river that flowed through the valley. The gentle stream was an emblem of the purity of her mind; and the transparency of it reflected one of the loveliest faces in the whole canton. She bent over the water, and her eyes remained immoveably fixed upon the surface of it; but it was not to admire the lustre of them, nor the dazzling fairness of her complexion, neither was it to examine if she could discover a pimple, or freckle, that might make her appear less attracting to her lover; for our readers will soon find that the idea of a lover had never yet entered Lina's head, nor — But we will not anticipate, for we are only at the river-side, and have not yet even seen her face;

face; for the imperfect glimpse that the water reflected cannot be called doing so.

As she stooped, her long flaxen tresses fell over her shoulders; the points of them touched the water, and the gentle waves were ruffled in their course by the interception; which prevented Lina, who was anxiously looking for something she had dropped into the river, from seeing to the bottom of it. She stroked her hair back with her hand several times, but it fell forward again as often as she stooped, till at last, vexed at the interruption it had so often occasioned, she snatched a blue ribbon that fastened her dress, and tied the intruding locks together: but just as she was bending to renew her search, a rustling that she heard behind her, made her turn her head, and she was not a little surprised at seeing an old woman standing close to her.



Although the unexpected sight of a stranger made Lina start, she immediately recovered her usual composure ; for what cause has innocence to fear ? and, addressing herself to her in her usual artless and gentle manner, said,—“ Who are you, my good old woman ? and how happens it that I never saw you before ? For I know all the inhabitants of this valley, as well as those of the neighbouring mountains. You must be a stranger ?—But which way did you come ?

not down those steep rocks, for they are inaccessible, nor along the valley, for I just now looked to see if I could discover any person to assist me in searching for something I have lost ; but I saw nobody, and I am certain if you had been near, I must have seen you, for my eyes are good, and I can see to a great distance.”

“ Thy



“Thy first supposition was right, my dear child,” replied the old woman, “for I saw from the top of that mountain how incautiously thou trusted that treacherous stream, and hastened down to warn thee to beware of it.”

“To warn me!—That’s unnecessary!—Indeed it is!—Look how gently the water flows—how unruffled the silver waves follow each other!—No! that stream cannot be deceitful—it cannot lure to betray!”

“But an old tradition says, that river demands a human victim every year.”

“I have heard the foolish report, but I assure you it is without foundation; for I am certain that no person has been drowned in it for above a year.—It is nothing but an idle tale, nothing else upon my word; and although many superstitious people declare

that it will still claim its due, and that when least expected, a dead body will be found floating upon it, I am determined not to believe what they say."

"To disbelieve every thing we hear is as faulty, as giving way to a childish credulity is foolish. There is a medium that ought to be observed betwixt both. But thou saidst just now that thou wanted assistance : —What dost thou require?—Can I help thee?"

"I am much obliged to you for your kind offer, but it is not in your power to help me ; besides, if you had even strength enough, which at your age is impossible I believe, since you entertain such a bad opinion of the river, you would have no inclination to do so ;—but God forbid that I should desire you, or any other person, to risk their  
life

life on my account; I will rather bear my loss without endeavouring to recover it, than suffer any one to be exposed to the least danger—the bare idea of their being so makes me shudder!”

“Thou hast most likely let something fall into the water;—was it a ring?”

Lina looked earnestly at the old woman as she pronounced the last words. Her perturbation greatly increased, and the crimson blush that the moment before had tinged her cheeks, fled from them, and was succeeded by a death-like paleness; but her eyes remained steadfastly fixed on the stranger, and she seemed incapable of withdrawing them.

“Why dost thou regard me with such visible marks of surprise?” said the lady with a look that tended to increase it.

“ For several reasons,” replied the astonished Lina. “ In the first place, I cannot imagine how it is possible for you to know that I let a ring drop into the river; and secondly, I can no ways account for your altered dress and appearance, which, if my eyes do not deceive me, is changed, and continues to change even whilst I look at you.”

“ How is my dress changed, and in what manner are my looks altered ?”

“ When I first saw you, you was clad in the humble attire of the inhabitants of this valley and the neighbouring mountains; but now your dress is of a dazzling beauty and whiteness; a silver girdle, curiously wrought with gold stars, encircles your waist, and a transparent veil, embroidered with flowers of uncommon beauty, is fastened to your hair with diamond bodkins; it flows from your  
head,

head, and sweeps the ground ;—but to describe the beauty of your countenance, is impossible.”

“ Thank God !” replied the stranger, clasping her hands in a transport of joy ; “ let me embrace thee, my dear, dear daughter for thy welcome intelligence, and reward thee for it by giving thee the ring thou art looking for.”

The ring and kiss were given so instantaneously, that Lina had received both before she recovered from the surprise that the unexpected appearance had occasioned her. It was some time before she could collect her thoughts sufficiently to reflect on the wonderful event that had just happened ; but the more she did so, the more her wonder increased. She however at last summoned up resolution enough to turn round to look for



her new friend, and to thank her for the ring ; but she was gone, and a trace of her footsteps was no where to be found.

Lina certainly would have been tempted to have regarded the whole as an illusion of fancy, or a dream, if she had not held the ring, which she was certain she had let fall into the river some time before, in her hand. Her uncle had given it her the preceding day, and had desired her to wear it, but to be particularly careful not to lose it, as her keeping it in her possession was of great consequence. Lina, who regarded it as a glittering toy, had played with it the whole morning ; and by changing it from one finger to another, as she was sitting, with a book in her hand, upon her favourite seat by the river side, had unfortunately dropped it into the water.

“ But



“ But how was it possible for her to get the ring ?” said Lina, after a long pause. “ She did not approach the water !—It must have been given to her by an invisible power !—or perhaps it was driven by the current to the other side of the mountain ; she might see it glisten in the water, was fortunate enough to catch hold of it, and came here to see if she could discover who had lost it. But why do I trouble myself with making conjectures about it,” continued she, at the same time kissing the ring, and putting it on her finger ; “ it is sufficient for me to know that I have recovered my ring, and seen a lovely—a very lovely female.”

The sound of “ Hift ! hift !” that seemed to proceed from the mountain, interrupted Lina’s monologue. She looked round, but

seeing no person, supposed it proceeded from the wind. A secret terror, however, seized her mind, and taking up her book, she walked, or rather ran, home as fast as she could.

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*THE UNCLE.*

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“ WHY did you stay out so much longer than usual this morning, my dear Lina ?” said her uncle whilst she was kissing his cheek, as she was accustomed to do whenever she returned from her morning walk.

Lina had never in her life told him a pre-meditated untruth, nor had she an idea that any reason could be strong enough to excuse  
her

her doing so ; she therefore related the adventure she had met with without the least disguise or omission. Her uncle listened to her with the most profound attention ; and when she had concluded, he desired her to shew him the ring. He intently examined it for some time, and then asked Lina if she had never observed a speck on one side of the diamond ? She replied in the affirmative. “ I saw it,” said she, “ the moment you gave me the ring ; it appears to be a spot of blood, and I have frequently tried to wash and rub it off. I was doing this when I let it fall into the water, but all my efforts to remove it have hitherto proved vain. I however intend to renew them, for that ugly spot is a great blemish to the beauty of the ring.”

Her

Her uncle returned her the ring, and desired she would shew him the spot.

Lina searched for it with as much attention as she had lately sought for the ring itself, and with as little success. She could hardly believe her eyes which presented the stone to her without a speck or stain, and she first rubbed her eyes with her hand, and then with a corner of her pocket-handkerchief, which she hoped would enable her to see clearer, and discover the hated spot ; but still not finding it, she went to the window, and then into a dark corner of the room. She turned the ring about in her hand at least twenty times, examined and re-examined it, breathed upon it, rubbed it with her muslin dress, and at last with a little brush ; but her endeavours were vain, and it was impossible for her to discover the least blemish.

blemish on the stone; the diamond was as bright on one side as the other.

“But what a fool am I,” said Lina, throwing down the brush, “to give myself so much trouble to discover what I have so often wished away!—It’s gone, my dear uncle,” continued she, shewing him the ring, “it’s entirely off, and I am certain it was you that removed it.”

“You are mistaken, Lina, it was not I that removed it; I did all in my power to do so before I gave you the ring, but all my attempts proved as ineffectual as your’s.”

“But who could do it? I am not very curious, yet I own I should like to know who removed it, and what means they used for that purpose.”

“It was in the possession of more than one during the time it was out of your’s.”

“I don’t



“ I don’t understand you, uncle. Possessed by more than one during the time I lost it !—The old lady had it—it was therefore in her power ; she perhaps—”

“ But you let it fall into the river ; it is therefore possible that the water removed it.”

“ No ! that cannot be ; for I often washed it with the same water without its having the least effect on it.”

“ Then it must have been the Matron ; and as her doing it may be regarded as a favour, I hope you will be grateful for it, and cherish her remembrance in your mind.”

“ It is impossible for me ever to forget her ; and if you know who she is, and will tell me where she lives, I will go and thank her for the favour she did me. Nor shall her living  
at



at a great distance, or the steepness of the mountains that lead to her dwelling, prevent my going, for I wish to be better acquainted with her;—do tell me where she lives.”

“ Even if it were in my power to inform you, I should not venture to do so at present; therefore cease your enquiries, and listen attentively to what I am going to say. You saw how much the beauty of your ring was diminished by the speck there was on it; it is the same with the human heart, which may be as easily stained with levity, vice, and folly, as your ring was with blood: therefore be careful, my dear Lina, to keep your heart and your reputation unfulled; for if either of them receive a stain, it will not be even in the Matron’s power to wipe it away.”

“ Then

“Then it was blood,” said Lina; but her uncle turned from her as he pronounced the last words, and either did not, or would not hear her. He hurried down the stone steps into the garden, and left Lina in the room, engaged in a labyrinth of thought.

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*COMPULSION.*

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THE old gentleman strolled about the garden for a considerable time in a pensive and thoughtful mood; and so much were his ideas engaged, that he walked along the great walk, and turned into the side ones, without noticing any of the objects that surrounded him—not even his flowers, which  
at

at other times were the chief objects of his attention ; nay, he even passed the spot where his favourite carnations stood, without stopping to admire their beauty, or endeavouring to discover some new perfection in them.

It was something uncommon in those times for a man of birth and fortune to be fond of flowers, or to devote his time to the study of agriculture or gardening. But Lina's uncle had experienced so many changes in life, that nothing but nature, uncorrupted nature, had any charm left for him : nor would he have loved his niece as well as he did, if her mind had not been as pure and artless as his flowers.

He had indeed as fine a collection of them as was to be found in that age ; and even at present they would not have disgraced a  
royal

royal garden, nor that of the greatest Harlem florist.

But at present their beauty was lost on him, for neither their glowing colours, nor their aromatic scent, attracted his notice; and he moved mechanically along with folded arms, without turning his head either on one side or the other, till a sudden gust of wind made his flower-pots rattle.

He had hitherto been silent, but the noise they made disturbed his reverie, and he broke out in the following exclamation:—  
“Hast thou then found thy way hither, thou restless spirit, that I vainly fancied confined within the walls of Pfyr Castle? And must I leave my loved retirement to obey thy imperious call? Could I have foreseen that thou wouldest have intruded thy unwelcome presence here, and that this solitary  
abode

abode would not have screened Lina from thy power, I might as well have left her to have shared the fate of her ancestors in the place where she was born, and saved myself the trouble I have taken on her account. But in this abode of simplicity and innocence I thought her out of thy reach; and I hoped to have remained unmolested till I had disposed of her hand to a worthy husband, or secured her from danger by placing her in a Convent. But—”

The wind, which had blown violently all the time he was speaking, at that instant increased to a perfect hurricane, and blew down several of his flower-pots. He looked mournfully at the broken fragments, and shaking his head, said, with a sigh, “ Well, if it must be, it must ! I’ll go and give immediate orders for our departure. But I  
beg



beg of thee, unhappy, restless spirit, to spare my poor flowers that never offended thee !”

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MINSTERDALE.

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“ HERE I thought her out of thy reach !” and the strong emphasis he laid on *here*, plainly shewed that he had fixed on a spot for his abode, where he fancied the perturbed spirit, whose influence he feared, more on his niece’s account than his own, either would not, or could not, follow him : for Lina’s uncle was a man who seldom spoke, much less acted, without having sufficient reasons for it ; and in the present case  
the



the event will prove, that the motive which induced him to quit the busy scenes of life for that calm retreat was sufficiently powerful.

Minsterdale, a beautiful valley near Basle in Switzerland, was the spot he fixed on for his abode ; it was in that part of it where the river Birs unites with the majestic Rhine. That river, as is well known, in summer and autumn resembles a purling stream that meanders gently through the vale, but in winter and spring its current is so strong, and it rushes along with such force and rapidity, that it carries every thing before it ; it is the alternate picture of meekness and rage, for sometimes its gentle murmurs sooth the minds of those who approach it into a soft and pleasing melancholy, and at others, its dashing waves and foaming billows excite

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horror

horror and despair. As the season is, it either flows gently, or rushes wildly through the valley, which is fenced in on each side with mountains of stupendous height : in some places they are so near the river, that they almost touch the edge of it, and at others they seem to have drawn themselves back to make room for a grassy plain, that affords a pleasing variety to the eye, and a comfortable resting-place for the weary traveller. Indeed bountiful Nature seems to have taken particular care that all his wants shall be supplied in that spot ; for there the high grass invites him to repose his weary limbs on a bed softer than down, under the shade of an aromatic shrub, whilst the cheerful warblers that inhabit its branches, solace his ear with their melody, and lull him into a refreshing slumber with their soothing notes ;  
there

there the lowing herds, grazing on the fat pasture, convince him that their hospitable owners will vie with each other who shall entertain him with their frugal fare.

This solitary spot may not improperly be called a place of refuge for distressed mortals; for thousands of those who are the voluntary victims of poverty and distress in large cities, might find a comfortable asylum there, if, instead of wasting away the best part of their lives in vain attempts, and useless complaints, they would make use of the power that Nature has bestowed on them, and apply themselves to honest labour.

But at that time this fruitful valley was but little known, and seldom visited. The few inhabitants were all Lina's uncle's vassals and dependants; he had a family seat near it, but it had, till the last ten years, been



uninhabited for near a century. When he determined to remove there, a number of those that were attached to him, either through affection or interest, wished to settle near him. For those he built neat but humble cottages, such as were suited to the place; he likewise gave each of them a piece of land to cultivate, and the liberty to fell as much wood as they wanted, and permission to fish and hunt as often as they chose; nay, he ever regarded them as his children, and his kindness made them ample amends for the loss of the bustle and amusements they had sacrificed on his account. In this peaceful spot they soon forgot the magnificent processions of the Knights and Ladies, the tilts, tournaments, banquets, and nightly revels, they had been accustomed to assist at: they likewise here were freed from  
the

the pressing yoke of servitude, nor felt they the disgust that intemperance creates; the bloody feuds that were inevitable in those times, which always involved the dependants in their Lord's fate, and had frequently robbed them of the little they possessed, were no more.

Here the soil was so fertile, that with very little labour all their wants were abundantly supplied. The care of their cattle was their chief occupation, which did not prevent their enjoying the various blessings that Nature had lavished on them—blessings that they too fully felt the value of to despise or neglect; and it was impossible for a stranger to travel through this valley without fancying himself in Arcadia. In one place a cottager lay asleep under a shady beech, another reclined upon the

grafs by the river fide, angling; a third playing on his oaken reed; and if he were feen to afcend the mountains, he was hailed by a rofy-cheeked girl to refresh himfelf with a draught of milk before he proceeded on his journey; children climbed after him, with little baskets of ftrawberries and other fruits that grew in the fhade, and played with the money that was given them in return; for the ufe of money, as well as the pain and pleafure it produces, was unknown to them.

This was the valley where we found Lina; and the river Birs, the water that fhe let her ring fall into, which, juft at the place where fhe flood, feemed to lofe itfelf in the mountain that is called the Piehort; it was there that the good-natured old lady appeared to her, and reftored to her her loft treasure in a  
more

more perfect state than when she let it drop into the water.

But although we found Lina alone, it must not be supposed that the valley was a solitude to her; for she was acquainted with all the inhabitants, and visited them by turns. She thought herself their equal, and was regarded by them as such: she played with the maidens, and the youths pressed her hand when she first met them in the morning; she took leave of them in the evening as if she had been their sister, and every one called her by the familiar appellation of Lina.

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*PFYRT CASTLE.*

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PFYRT CASTLE, the hereditary feat of the family of that name, stood on the eminence of a fruitful mountain to the right of Basle, and at a considerable distance from the valley just described. It was a magnificent building, equal in beauty to any in Helvetia; for its present owner, as well as its former possessors, had spared no expence in adorning it.

There was a small town at the foot of the hill on which it was situated, which, if it had enjoyed the privileges of many other towns, would



would soon have equalled the largest in size and population. A number of mechanics and artists were settled in it, whose chief dependence was on the castle ; for as there was a perpetual succession of company there, they were kept in constant employment, and were sure to have their work well paid for. A number of persons of small independent fortunes, were likewise settled there ; and the reason of their chusing to reside in it, was on account of its being cheaper than larger towns ; but the most weighty reason was, the notice that was taken of them by the noble inhabitants of the castle, who often (particularly if the company were not numerous enough to afford the variety that was necessary to keep them in a good humour with each other), invited them to the sumptuous entertainments they gave ; and to them

it was immaterial on whose account the invitation was given, if it were intended to afford them pleasure, or increase their own.

The present possessor of the castle, Count Ulrich of Pfyrt, was between thirty and forty ; but as he was a handsome man, he did not appear so old as he really was. In the early part of his life he had been engaged in several hostile actions, in which he had given distinguished proofs of the courage and intrepidity of his disposition. His sister Lina's birth was the cause of his mother's death ; and his father, who never ceased to lament the loss of a much-loved wife, only survived her a few years. Ulrich, finding himself in possession of an ample fortune, and extensive estates, sheathed his sword, and preferring repose to a martial life, determined to spend his days in ease and comfort.

comfort. After having passed some years in a supine state of inactivity, he at last, in compliance with the advice of his friends, determined to visit the Nobles of the land who had marriageable daughters, in search of a wife to share his splendour with him.

It will easily be supposed that a suitor like Ulrich would not long sue in vain ; wherever he went, he was treated with the greatest marks of distinction and respect, and the fairest ladies vied with each other to make themselves agreeable to him. But to avoid the trouble of going further, for Ulrich was not fond of trouble, his choice fell on one of the first he saw. Agnes of Momplegard was celebrated for her beauty and accomplishments ; and as a handsome, rich, and well-bred wife was what he required, and all those advantages were com-

bined in her, he fixed on her for his companion through life.

But Ulrich had drawn a prize in the matrimonial lottery that he little expected or deserved; for Agnes did not only possess the external accomplishments just mentioned, but she was likewise virtuous, amiable, and good; and the mildness of her disposition, and affability of her manners, made her beloved and esteemed by all who knew her.

No inducement would have been powerful enough to have prevailed on her father, who doted on her, to compel, or even to persuade her to do violence to her inclination, and he had suffered her to refuse several advantageous offers of marriage that had been made her; but when the Count of Pfyrt offered her his hand, he advised her to  
accept

accept it. Agnes's heart was free, and knowing the Count was esteemed as a man of probity and honour, she gave her consent. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp ; each of the parties was convinced of the other's merit, but neither of them felt what is generally called love, that secret sympathy which unites the minds.

The marriage ceremony was performed at Momplegard ; the entertainments given on the occasion, were princely, and succeeded each other with such rapidity, that they did not allow time for reflection. All the company attended the new-married pair to Pfyrt Castle, where the same festivities, but if possible with still greater magnificence, were repeated ; for Ulrich was determined not to be excelled by his father-in-law. But the remembrance of them sunk into oblivion as



soon as the guests departed ; and there was only one circumstance that attended Agnes's arrival that made a lasting impression on her mind. We will relate it to our readers ; for although it happened a considerable time before the commencement of this history, it is too closely connected with it for us to let it pass unnoticed.

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*THE UNEXPECTED VISITER.*

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WHEN the time of retiring to rest arrived, the Count led Agnes to the state bed-chamber, which was in a wing of the castle that had not been inhabited for time out of mind, and the door that led  
from

from that room to the other parts of the building, was carefully concealed with the same tapestry hangings that covered the walls. Ulrich had not troubled his head about this part of the castle for some years; nor would he now, if he had not known that an ancient custom, the origin of which he had never given himself the pains to trace, had not prevailed in his family, for every new-married couple to sleep the first night in that room.

It was Ulrich's intention to pull down the old wing, and to rebuild it anew, at the time (it was soon after his father's death) that he made several other alterations and improvements in the castle. But as soon as he mentioned his design, the servants entreated him upon their knees, for his own sake and their's, to spare that building, and not  
to

to suffer a stone of it to be removed. Their terror and entreaties recalled to his mind some dark hints that his mother had once, when he was a child, let drop in his hearing, which, although he had not thought on since, he remembered had, at that time, greatly puzzled him, and excited his curiosity;—it was something relating to those apartments, and a certain lady of the family of Pfyrt; and he recollected that his mother had said, at the same time, she wished it were possible to effect her repose.

The servants informed him that wing of the castle was haunted; that the ghost always appeared in the shape and dress of an old woman; and that as it was a wicked, mischievous spirit, if its habitation were disturbed, it would certainly haunt the other parts of the castle, and torment the whole family.

Count

Count Ulrich attentively listened to their relation : and although he pretended to disbelieve the truth of what they said, and was even at times tempted to place it entirely to the account of superstition, or the force of imagination, as he, the owner of the castle, had resided in it some years, without having seen or heard any thing that bore the least resemblance to a supernatural appearance ; yet at others, he thought there was a possibility of the report not being quite void of foundation. But probably his former opinion would have preponderated, and notwithstanding their remonstrances, the obnoxious building would have been pulled down, if his mother's words had not occurred to him.

Ulrich loved his mother with an affection that was truly filial whilst she was living,  
and

and revered her memory when she was no more. Besides, he was assured she must have had some reason for what she said ; for with all the softness and delicacy of her sex, she possessed a strength of mind, and a firmness of character that are but seldom found in it. He likewise knew that a secret she intended to disclose to him, died with her ; she had deferred the communication of it from day to day till her premature delivery (which happened at a time he was absent), and sudden death made her revealing it impossible. That her former hints alluded to the secret that oppressed her mind, seemed probable to Ulrich ; and he was strengthened in the supposition by the servants whispering to each other (which report at last reached his ear), that the restless Matron had certainly caused his mother's death : and he



recollected having heard her say during her pregnancy, that if the child were a girl, she should not survive its birth ; and that immediately after her death, his father had given orders to have the doors of those rooms, that had hitherto only been kept locked, bolted and barricaded with iron bars on the outside, and then covered with tapestry, so that not the least appearance of doors was to be seen.

Soon after the Countess's death, Ulrich's uncle came to the castle, and after a long and private conference with his father, took his new-born niece away with him. She had never been at the castle since, nor had Ulrich seen his sister since her infancy ; for he hated her for being the cause, although the innocent one, of his mother's death.— But to return to our history.

Ulrich,

Ulrich, attended by the Count of Momplegard and the rest of the company, led Agnes through the gallery to the bridal-chamber; the guests took leave of them at the door, but the old Count went into the room with them. A number of family pictures that hung in the room attracted his attention, and he looked at his son-in-law's forefathers, which he now regarded as his own, with visible satisfaction. The men were ranged on one side, and the females on the other; many of the latter were remarkably beautiful; but a circumstance that not a little surprised him was, that several of them had new-born infants in their arms, and that their eyes were fixed on them with looks of sorrow as well as maternal tenderness. The Count asked Ulrich who they were? and if he knew the reason of the melancholy

melancholy that their countenances expressed ?

Whilst they were looking at the portraits, a beautiful screen, embroidered with gold and coloured silks, that stood in a corner of the room, engaged Agnes's attention so entirely, that she did not hear Ulrich's answer. "That's my mother," said he, pointing to the last picture ; "and the child in her arms is my sister, whose birth was the cause of her death. That—" The Count of Mompiegard started ; "Hush ! hush !" said he in a low voice ; "for if all these ladies died in the same manner, it is a bad encouragement for those who marry into your family ; we will let the subject drop at present, and resume it again another time." They then turned to Agnes, and united with her in praising the beauty of the

the screen. "It is certainly the work of one of the ladies of your family," said she, turning to her husband. "But I see it is not quite finished. Look, here is the end of silk still hanging where it was left off. Do you know the reason of its being left unfinished?"

Ulrich, a little confused at the unexpected question, replied with some hesitation, that he did not recollect the reason at present; he believed she was prevented by something that happened to her, and that he would tell her the particulars another time.

The old Count, guessing that it was caused by some tragical event like the portraits, and fearing his daughter might renew her enquiries, kissed her, and, wishing Ulrich a good night, hastily left the room.

"There

“There is something very awful in this apartment,” said the Countess as soon as her father had left them; “and the reflection that all those whose likenesses hang there, once inhabited it, and were what we are now, makes me more serious than I wish to be.—If you are not sleepy, Count, let us chat a little before we retire to rest; for there are several things here that engage my attention, and which I wish you would explain to me: for example, this unfinished screen, and the end of silk that hangs suspended there, interest me a good deal.”

Count Ulrich was going to reply, but a rustling that was heard behind the hangings made them start; they both looked round at the same moment to see who it was that ventured to disturb their retirement. The  
tapestry



tapestry door opened; and an old woman, in a plain housewife's dress, entered.

Ulrich shuddered; but Agnes surveyed the dame with the greatest composure; and after she had looked at her for some time, her eyes wandered over the row of female portraits, till she found one whose features resembled the Matron's. "That is her!" said she, taking hold of Ulrich's arm, and pointing to it. "But why do you tremble? You have undoubtedly often seen that picture, and the original of it paying you a visit ought not to frighten you."—Then turning to the spirit, she continued—"Your appearance, venerable lady, is so mild and good, that I am certain your intention is neither to terrify nor hurt us."

"Far from it, my children," was her reply; "I am only come to wish you joy, as  
I do

I do every new-married pair the first time they sleep in this apartment."

Ulrich did not answer the Matron, but looking stedfastly at his wife, expressed the greatest surprise at her courage and intrepidity. "Your wonder will cease, my dear Ulrich," said Agnes, "when I tell you that this is not the first time of my seeing that form; she paid us a visit at Momplegard the night after our marriage. I heard the door open, started up in my bed, and saw her enter. The unexpected sight at first made me tremble; you was asleep by my side, and I turned to wake you; but she made me a motion not to do so. I obeyed her commands, and looked at her without speaking; she nodded her head as a token of approbation, and after walking round the bed three times, left the room. The apparition

rition was far from alarming me, for I fancied it a beatified spirit, sent from Heaven to watch over us; and the reason of my not informing you of the event sooner, was the uncertainty I was in if she appertained to your family or mine. This is the reason of my compoture :” and turning to the Matron, who stood near her, “ I am glad,” continued she, “ that you have not disappointed the hope I have entertained, ever since that night, of seeing you again.”

“ I thank thee for the confidence thou hast in me, Agnes of Momplegard,” replied the Matron, “ and thou shalt find that I am not undeserving of it. When I first discovered that my great great grandson was married, I own I was a little offended at his nuptials not being celebrated here ; for it seemed as if he slighted the abode of his  
ancestors.

ancestors. I however wished to see if the person he had chosen was worthy to bear the name of our family: I saw thee, Agnes, and thou met with my entire approbation; for thy mind is pure, and thy heart guiltless. "I endeavoured to make thee comprehend the satisfaction I felt, but I could not speak, for the power of speech is only granted me in this castle and its environs."

Count Ulrich had very attentively surveyed his great great-grandmother during the time she was speaking to his wife, and was very much surprised to find an astonishing resemblance between her and a picture that hung in his late mother's dressing-room. He knew she had painted it herself, and had always taken it for a fancy-piece; for painting and drawing were arts that she excelled in: and she had ornamented all

her rooms with the works of her own hands.

Ulrich had often viewed that picture with particular pleasure ; it represented a matron dressed in a dark purple robe, white girdle and veil, a bunch of keys hooked on the girdle, and a cambric ruff. The form of the dress was exactly the same as that worn by the middling class of people ; but the colour of it denoted the wearer being a person of rank ; for purple in those times was only worn by persons of noble birth, and plebeians usually dressed themselves in grey or brown. But the habit was what Ulrich regarded least ; for there was a look of benignity, and secret, as well as deep-rooted sorrow in the countenance, that it was impossible for him, or indeed any person, to look at unmoved : for a smiling face seemed to conceal a breaking heart.

“ If



“ If I am not mistaken, venerable parent,” said Ulrich, after a long pause, “ your picture hangs in one of the rooms that my late mother inhabited ? I wonder you never appeared to me before ; for you, who can doubtless see what passes in the heart of man, must know how sincerely I loved that best of parents.”

“ The affection that thou felt for thy mother was praiseworthy,” replied the Matron ; “ I wish every child imitated thy example ; if they did, there would not be so many crimes committed in the world as there are. But, Ulrich, the love thou bore the dead ought to be shewn to the living ; and how is it possible for thee, who loved thy mother, to hate thy sister, and to abandon her in the manner thou dost ? And how canst thou treat me with so much

cruelty? But—" Tears seemed to start into the Matron's eyes as she pronounced the last words. Agnes was very much affected; she attempted to seize the Matron's hand, but she shrunk back to avoid her touch. She entreated her to proceed; and assured her that she would do all in her power, and that she did not doubt of prevailing on her husband to do all in his, to procure her repose.

"Compose thyself, my dear Agnes, my amiable daughter," said the Matron. "My time is expired; I must leave thee for the present, but I hope I shall soon see thee again; perhaps I shall then be allowed to say what I dare not now. Ulrich, look at that child," pointing to the last picture. "The same blood flows in her veins as in thine—she is thy sister; and her being the  
4 cause

cause of thy mother's death, cannot be attributed to her as a crime :—remember she was her child.”—The Matron glided through the door as soon as she had pronounced the last words, and left Ulrich and his wife in a state of perturbation and astonishment that it is impossible to describe.

“ Ulrich, my dear Ulrich,” said the Countess, taking hold of his hand, and pressing it to her heart, “ I hope you will not refuse the first favour I ask of you ;—do send for your sister ; let her live with us, and be my companion and friend.”

“ Never! never!” replied the Count, foaming with rage, and rudely pushing away his wife's hand. “ I will never consent to her coming here, nor will I ever see her if I can help it. She was the cause of my mother's death ; and whoever for the  
D 3 future

future mentions her name to me, I shall regard and treat as an enemy. I hate and detest her, as well as the old hag that has just left us."

A deep sigh, resembling a groan, that was heard on the outside of the door through which the Matron passed, made Agnes tremble; but she did not venture to renew her entreaties to her irritated husband. They went to bed, but not to rest; for their minds were too much agitated, and their thoughts too disagreeably engaged to permit their enjoying either sleep or repose.

The next morning Ulrich was peevish and discontented, and the Countess thoughtful and melancholy. The entertainments of the day contributed in some measure towards cheering their drooping spirits, or at least enabled them to conceal the vexation  
that

that preyed on their minds from common observers. But it did not escape an affectionate parent's notice ; for the Count of Mompiegard too plainly perceived that the marriage he had so anxiously wished might take place, was not likely to prove a happy one. He however concealed his fears in his own bosom, nor did he even enquire of his daughter what was the cause of her uneasiness ; for the die was cast—her fate was unalterably fixed ; and whether it was happy or miserable, it was not in his power to alter it. But he could not prevent a tear starting into his eye when he took leave of his darling child ; the Countess kissed it away, and said that the remembrance of that tear would comfort her if she were ever in need of consolation, for it would remind her of the sympathetic affection of the best of fathers.



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*VIRIA.*

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THE Countess of Pfyrt, whom for the future we will call Agnes, as it is possible that some more Countesses of that name may appear in this history, had never, as our readers know, possessed any great share of her husband's affection; and, provoked at the preference the Matron had given her, his coldness, or rather dislike increased daily; he regarded her more as the manager of his family than his wife, and although he continued to treat her with some outward shew of respect when they were in company, his doing so was more to gratify his own pride

as

as she bore his name, than from any personal regard he felt for her. But when they were alone, her heart was often severely wounded by the unkindness and harshness of his reproaches, particularly when she (as she sometimes ventured to do in the mildest manner) hinted her disapprobation of their dissipated and extravagant way of living, and advised him to make some retrenchment in their many superfluous expences. At such times he usually broke out in a torrent of invective and reproach, saying, he wished he had never seen her—that she embittered every comfort of his life, and marred every enjoyment of it. Agnes's heart was deeply wounded by his unkindness, but she bore it with the most angelic patience; and when she was alone, a flood of tears often eased her breaking heart.

Ulrich's ill-humour, and the unkindness of his behaviour to his amiable wife, was likewise increased by a report that was circulated of the arrival of a foreign lady at Ravensburg Castle. She was said to be a Princess, who had left her father's Court on account of the ill-treatment she received from an envious step-mother, who hated and persecuted her, because she rivalled her in beauty, which she was reported to be a paragon of—a goddess descended from heaven, adorned with every charm and accomplishment, such as had never before been united in the same person. Fame likewise added that she was immensely rich; that she had been heard to mention her intention of settling in Switzerland, purchasing an estate there, and, as her heart was free, marrying, if she found a person to her liking.

This

This report soon reached Ulrich's ear ; he frowned, and looked very much displeased when he first heard it ; for his wife had hitherto been esteemed the flower of Switzerland, and her right to the palm of beauty was till then undisputed. But although her being the handsomest woman in the country was of very little consequence to Ulrich himself, yet he wished her to be thought so by others.

He therefore hastened to Ravensburg Castle, in hopes of finding the report of Viria's charms exaggerated ; for his repose, as well as Agnes's, in a great measure depended on its being so. But that he might dazzle her with his grandeur, he went with all the ostentation and pomp of dress and attendants in his power. He found a large company assembled at Ravensburg, and in the

midst of them stood the majestic Viria, like a constellation among the lesser stars. Nor was the handsome Ulrich without his share of admiration, for every one crowded about him as soon as he entered the hall, and assured him how glad they were to see him; nay, he even fancied that Viria did not regard him with indifference, and that thought suggested an idea to his mind that flushed his cheeks with a glow of pleasure. But his plan was frustrated as soon as formed, by the owner of the castle asking him why he had not added to the pleasure his company gave, by bringing his charming wife with him?

This natural, but unexpected question entirely defeated his purpose, which was to ingratiate himself into Viria's favour, and gain her affection, before he informed her  
that



that he was married. What a gratification to his pride to know, that, although he did not possess, he was loved by the most beautiful woman in the world !

Ulrich stammered an incoherent excuse, and said something about the impossibility of her coming with him ; but the embarrassment he was in, although he endeavoured to conceal it by assuming an air of gaiety, was too evident to escape the notice of any person in the room.

Viria was, however, the one who remarked it most, for his averted eye was to her a convincing proof that she was the cause of it ; and as vanity happened to be her ruling passion as well as his, she was not a little delighted that the handsomest man she had ever seen, who had such a beautiful wife as she heard Agnes was, should be so much  
struck

struck with surprise at the first sight of her, as not to know what he said or did ;—it was the greatest compliment that had ever been paid to her charms, and that is saying a good deal, for she had just left a Court that was renowned for its gallantry; and Ulrich's silent homage encouraged her to hope, that the loss of the lovers she had left there would be made up by the admiration she should meet with here.

Ulrich, although thrown off his guard at first, soon recovered himself, and assumed the ease and sprightliness that he could always command when he wished to please; for he was too much a courtier and man of the world to be easily put out of countenance. Besides, Viria did all in her power to amuse and make him satisfied with himself; she was particularly attentive, and  
directed

directed her discourse to him oftener than to any other Knight. Her doing so neither excited wonder nor envy, but rather contributed towards keeping the company in a good humour with each other; for Ulrich was a well-bred, entertaining, and—married man, therefore by no means a dangerous one; and as money was at that time scarce in Switzerland, and Viria was known to be mistress of a large independent fortune, which she could spend where and in what manner she pleased, every one wished her to settle in those parts: policy therefore induced them to make her stay amongst them as agreeable to her as they possibly could, and every day was marked by some new and splendid entertainment. The days passed away as rapidly as if they had been hours; till Ulrich, unable to find an excuse for prolonging

prolonging his visit, which already greatly exceeded the usual length of one, was obliged to take leave, and return to his own castle, which, in his idea, when compared to that he was going to leave, appeared a dreary solitude to him.

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*THE DREAM.*

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IT had however not proved so to Agnes, although it must be owned that her company was of a very different kind to that which was assembled at Ravensburg Castle.

Several tedious months had elapsed since her marriage (for they appeared so to her, notwithstanding

notwithstanding the concourse of company that was continually assembled at the castle when her husband was at home) without the Matron's having repeated her visit, which she had given her reason to expect she would do the last time she saw her; and Agnes felt an irresistible desire, a secret longing that she could no ways account for, to see and converse with her again; and she would often, when alone, give vent to her thoughts, and loudly express the wish that never forsook her mind.

At a little distance from the castle there was a garden, or rather pleasure-ground, that Ulrich had inclosed since his father's death with great taste and expence; it was a piece of waste land, and that which was before a wilderness, was now a beautiful and romantic spot: avenues were cut through the wood,  
rugged



rugged plains turned into grassy meadows; and flowers and aromatic plants now bloomed in those places that were before covered with thorns and brambles. Seats and arbours, covered with jessamine, woodbine, and roses; shady walks, open plains, an intricate labyrinth, a beautiful water-fall, a hermitage, and rivulet, with a bridge over it that led to a thatched cottage, surprised and pleased the wondering eye each moment with some new object, and proved the conquest of Art over Nature.

Agnes, who was delighted with the various beauties of the place, visited it every day when the weather permitted. But there was one particular spot that she called her own; Nature still predominated there, and the hand of the artist had only given a little more softness to the beautiful and picturesque

resque scene;—that was her favourite retreat, where she had often wept unseen, and where she had likewise often felt herself comforted by the reflection, that as Ulrich had corrected the stubbornness of Nature in that place, it was not impossible but that he might in time amend the errors of his own heart, which could not be so bewildered as that was before he began to cultivate it. Besides, the hope of his reformation was increased by the pleasing expectation she had of presenting him with a pledge of their love; and she thanked the Blessed Virgin for the comfort that hope afforded her. “Paternal affection,” said she, “will warm his heart; he will love his child, and me for its sake.”

A mossy seat near the river side, that was shaded by a row of young olive trees, was the

the place where Agnes usually sat ; the prospect was terminated by a neighbouring wood, which, and the gentle murmuring of the river, always lulled her mind into a soft and pleasing melancholy. In that spot she had frequently bewailed her hard fate, and prayed to Heaven to relieve, or at least give her fortitude to support it without repining ;—there she had often addressed herself to her invisible friend, and said, “ Oh ! that thou wouldst visit me here—here where, secure from intrusion, we could freely converse with each other, and lament together that the Countesses of Pfyrt are doomed to be unhappy !” For Agnes was convinced that the restlessness of the Matron’s spirit was caused by some unmerited misfortune that had befallen her whilst living.

W hilst

Whilst these, and a number of thoughts of the same kind, passed in her mind, she leaned her head against a tree, and sleep, that had fled from her the preceding night, sealed her eye-lids. She had indeed passed a dreadful night; for a thousand fears and presentiments of approaching evil had filled her mind, and caused her tears to flow so incessantly, that she had not closed her eyes the whole night. Her unhappiness was greatly increased by the anxiety her husband's absence occasioned; when he left her, he promised to return in two days, and he had been gone above a week: sometimes she was afraid some misfortune had happened to him, and at others, that it was his intention to forsake her entirely.

During the short interval of repose that Nature kindly sent to calm her troubled mind,

mind, she dreamt that she was in the room where she had seen the Matron, and saw her sitting upon the side of the bed with an hour-glass in her hand; she seemed to count the running sand, and her countenance was strongly expressive of sorrow and disappointment.

Agnes had only slept one night in that room, and had never been in it since;—for the day after her arrival at the castle, Ulrich had ordered another bed-chamber to be prepared; and the reason he gave for doing so was, that it was inconvenient to sleep in a room at so great a distance from those they usually inhabited. Agnes approved of his doing so; nor did she ever entertain the least suspicion that the change of apartments was the cause of the Matron not appearing to her; for she imagined that  
beings



beings of that nature were not to be restrained by doors, locks, or bolts. But her dream suggested the idea that she was confined to that room, and that her sadness was occasioned by her being neglected. "Let me hasten to see and comfort thee!" said Agnes, rising from her seat, and hurrying towards the castle as fast as she was able. She walked so fast, that she was quite out of breath when she entered it; and she ordered the first person she saw to tell Jutta to come to her immediately, and bring the key of the state bed-chamber with her.

Jutta, an old virgin, who had lived in the family upwards of sixty years, came at last muttering and grumbling, and seemingly in such a horrid ill-humour, that Agnes, afraid that some accident had happened in the family during her absence, hastily enquired  
what

what was the matter? Her reply convinced her that her fears were vain; and supposing her altered looks were occasioned by something that had put her out of temper, thought to please her by telling her that she believed the hope she entertained of giving an heir to the Pfyrt family was not without foundation. But instead of Jutta's countenance brightening up at this information, as Agnes thought it would, it contracted still more; and the vexation it before expressed, was changed into a look of terror. Agnes, who could no ways account for the strange humour she was in, and secretly vexed at her insensibility, desired her to give her the key she had sent for.—“For God's sake, honoured Lady,” replied the trembling virgin, “why do you connect the joyful intelligence you have just given  
me

me, with the key of that unfortunate room? For Heaven's sake do not enter it—do not listen to the suggestions of the evil spirit that tempts you to do so; if you do, it will lead you to destruction! Ah! if you knew what I know, or could guess the fatal consequences that will attend your going into it, you would not wish to do so.”—Agnes's thoughts were too much engaged to suffer her to pay much attention to Jutta's tedious harangue, which she interrupted with a peevish “ Well, well, only give me the key.”

Jutta was a person of consequence in the family; every one in it applied to her for advice in every doubtful case, and her opinion was regarded as decisive, at least no person ventured to contradict it. Her father, one of the present Count's grandfather's vassals,

was killed in battle some months before Jutta's birth ; and as his wife only survived him a year, the infant orphan was taken into the castle, and bred up there. In her twentieth year she was placed as attendant on the Countess of Pfyrt, which place she had retained ever since to the different ladies that had married into that family. Jutta did not a little pride herself on her virtue and unblemished character, which had never been stained by the venomous tongue of Slander. In her youth she had refused one or two advantageous offers of marriage, and might not improperly be called an antique and hereditary fixture of Pfyrt Castle.

“ Saint Ursula, and the eleven thousand virgins defend me !” said Jutta, crossing herself when her mistress asked her for the  
key

key the third time. "Never, and I have served in the same capacity as I now do these forty years, never was my advice so entirely disregarded as it is now. I know it is my duty to obey ; and I must obey your commands, even if you were to order me to risk my poor life, as you intend doing your's. But Heaven be praised that it has preserved us from the misfortune that threatened us, and that both our lives are out of danger. I have not got the key ; for the Lords of Pfyrt, to prevent mischief, have always made it a rule, since I have lived in the family, to keep that key in their own possession. I often thought, God forgive me ! that their doing so was foolish enough, as it was impossible to suppose that any body would venture their lives to no purpose ; but I find I was mistaken."



Agnes was a little startled, but her being so was not owing to the violence of Jutta's declamation, but to her not having the key; and the Lords of Pfyrth always keeping it themselves, was a circumstance that appeared extremely dark and mysterious to her.

"But why do you put yourself into a passion, Jutta?" said she; "I did not know it was improper to go into that room—if I had, I would have said nothing about it. My intention was only to look at the family pictures; but as it cannot be, it is of no consequence; and you may depend on my not mentioning it to you again."

"God send you never may!" replied Jutta, whose terror was a little abated by her mistress's last words. "I wish I was certain that you would never mention, nor think of  
it

it again; I should then be the happiest creature in the whole universe: and if you knew as much as I do, I am sure you would have no desire to enter that room. Pray make me easy by assuring me that you never will; dear good Lady, say that you never will!"

"Who would venture to act in opposition to the wise and sagacious Jutta's advice?"

"You may make me an object of ridicule, and laugh at me as much as you please, although you are not accustomed to make game of any body; but for your own sake, I beg, I conjure you to listen to my advice this once; for the most fatal consequences will, I assure you, attend your disregarding it. But, by way of warning, let me add, that the former Countesses of Pfyrth had all

of them, like you, during their pregnancies, a desire to go into that ill-fated room; and although they were not permitted to do so, their wishing it proved the cause of their death if they gave birth to a daughter."

It will easily be conceived that Agnes was very much shocked at this unexpected information, and Jutta was as much terrified as her mistress when she reflected on what the consequences of the incautious manner in which she had given her well-meant advice might be:—Agnes, who recovered first, had some difficulty to comfort her; but she at last succeeded by repeatedly assuring her that she had long suspected what she had just told her. But the more Jutta reflected on her imprudence, the more she was dissatisfied with herself; and

and the agitation her mind had felt during the day, made her so ill towards evening, as to be obliged to go to bed at an early hour: her doing so facilitated Agnes's design, which she determined to execute that very night if possible.

Her first business, as soon as she had dismissed her other waiting-maid, was to go into her husband's room, and look for the key, which, to her inexpressible pleasure, she found hanging on a peg in his closet with several others. She returned to her own apartment, took a sconce with two candles from the wall, and fixing it in a candlestick, walked along the passage as gently as possible, till she came to the room door where she expected to find her friend. As she put the key into the key-hole, the castle clock struck twelve; at the first stroke, she heard

the same kind of rustling, but not quite so loud as that she had heard the night she slept in the room. This, instead of alarming, encouraged her to proceed ; she opened the door, and had the satisfaction to see the object of her wishes sitting upon the bed. But although her face and dress were very different from what they were the last time she saw her (for she then appeared an elderly Matron in an humble attire, and now a youthful beauty), yet it was impossible for Agnes to mistake her for another, and if she had before discovered a likeness between her and the picture that hung in the room, the resemblance was rendered still more striking by every particular part of her dress being exactly the same.

Agnes approached the bed with respectful silence ; and as she moved along, her eyes  
were



were alternately fixed on the Matron and the picture, to discover if they varied from each other in any respect :—they did not ; and the more attentively she compared them, the greater the similitude appeared ; and the change, from the gravity of age to the cheerfulness of youth, increased her confidence, and added to her pleasure. The Matron as attentively watched Agnes as she did her ; and perceiving the surprise her countenance expressed when she first entered the room, and the comparison she was forming between her and the picture, she rose from the bed, and approaching Agnes, said, in a tone of voice expressive of pleasure—“ Art thou then come to visit me, my dear daughter ? This is the first time, since I began my dreary pilgrimage, that a ray of comfort has cheered my hopeless mind. Tell, Oh ! tell me, if I resemble

that picture? Am I dressed in white?  
Have I a silver girdle round my waste?  
And——”

“Oh yes, yes! my dear mother,” replied Agnes, interrupting her, “and a transparent veil, beautifully embroidered with coloured flowers, adorns your head. But if you cannot see yourself, and the knowledge of it has the power of giving you pleasure, let me inform you, my dear mother, that the dazzling beauty of your whole appearance makes you resemble an angel of light.”

“Why cannot I press thee to my heart, as well as thank thee, my dear, dear Agnes, for the consolation thy words afford me? Thou hast removed the first of the dreadful maledictions that rested on me;—may Heaven grant my wish, which is, that thou mayst likewise free me from the second!—

But

But the third—alas ! the third is not in thy power ! that is reserved for another ; but who she is, and when, where, and how it will happen, is——But cease, repining heart, and instead of complaining, rejoice that part of thy wish is granted.”

“ You cannot think, my kind and venerable parent, how much the sight of you, as well as your words, solace and delight my mind. I was very unhappy, very unhappy indeed, when I came hither, and at present I feel quite easy. I am certain you will not forsake me ; and what cause have I to fear, when protected by such a powerful friend ?”

“ You greatly over-rate my power, which is indeed very limited ; and so far from being such as you imagine, that it is I who am in need of your assistance. In this castle every

one is afraid to mention my name, lest I should do them an injury; and every misfortune that happens, is always laid to my charge. I lament the injustice that is done me, but I do not blame them for it, for their fears, although idle, are natural; for it is my hard fate, whether visible or invisible, to be doomed to a continual state of restlessness. But let us hasten to conclude our interview; for I perceive thy husband approaches. How thou contrived to come into this room, I do not know, and I am ignorant if thou wilt be able to repeat thy visit; but if thou canst prevail on thy husband to let thee lie-in here, thou wilt secure thyself from an impending danger, and remove the second curse that rests on me.— Farewel! In idea I fold thee to my maternal bosom! I wish thou lived in those rooms,”

pointing

pointing to the door she came through;  
“if thou didst, I could tell thee more.”

She turned from Agnes, and fixed her eyes on her picture; whilst she was regarding it, her dress and features gradually changed to their usual matronly form, and she, without speaking another word, glided through the tapestry door.

“How gladly would I trust myself in your power!” said Agnes, calling after her. But as she did not receive an answer, she did not venture to speak to her again; she therefore carefully locked the door, and after putting the key in the place where she had taken it from, returned to her own room, and went to bed. But such a variety of thoughts crowded themselves into her mind, that it was impossible for her to sleep; and the night was spent in thinking what methods  
she



she should take to prevail on her husband to let her lie-in in that room, and (which seemed to her likely to be attended with still greater difficulty) to let her inhabit the other apartments; for to live where the Matron did, and to enjoy more of her loved society, was what she ardently wished.

The Matron was right when she said that Ulrich was approaching; he had travelled the whole night, and arrived at the castle just as Agnes had sat down to breakfast. We have already said that Agnes was handsome; but we assure our readers, that as real beauty does not need the artificial aid of dress to set it off to advantage, that she was much more so in her plain morning dishabille, than in a more studied attire. She sprang from her seat directly as she heard the carriage stop, rushed into her husband's

husband's arms as soon as he alighted, and expressed the most unfeigned pleasure at his return. Ulrich returned her embraces with a coldness that would have chilled her heart at any other time ; but at that it was far from intimidating her, for she had a piece of news in petto that she thought could not fail of regaining his affection, even if it were alienated from her : nor did it fail entirely, for Ulrich's heart was not quite dead to the feelings of nature, and he kissed his wife with tenderness, and really felt a momentary satisfaction when she informed him of her pregnancy.

Yet his pleasure was but momentary ; for the comparison that his ungrateful heart soon after formed between her and Viria, drove every humane and virtuous thought from his mind. She whom he had just left

was

was a King's daughter—this only a Count's ; Agnes was his wife—Viria free, and at liberty to dispose of her hand to whomever she chose. Whoever possessed Viria would be envied by all the world, and another being an object of envy, made him one of pity—himself an object of pity !—Ulrich of Pfyrt an object of compassion, was a thought that was insupportable to him.

Ulrich was totally blinded, or at least every thing appeared to him in a false light ; for he disliked Agnes for her virtues, and admired Viria for her faults ; the latter seemed to him formed to rule the whole world, and the former a weak-spirited woman, who did not deserve, neither was she fit to be Countess of Pfyrt. He repeatedly cursed his own folly, precipitation, and imprudence for marrying so soon ; for had  
he

he waited a little longer, he should have had it in his power to call the most beautiful woman in the world, who plainly shewed that he was not indifferent to her, his. But now he was bound—bound with galling fetters that precluded every hope of happiness.

The restless uneasiness of Ulrich's mind, his fullen looks, and the coldness of his behaviour, were too visible to escape Agnes's observation; her heart, although it was far from suspecting the turpitude of his, was so deeply wounded by finding every hope of fixing his affection fled, that the tears started into her eyes. Her tears irritated him still more; he rose from his seat, and pushing away his chair in a furious manner, hastily left the room, muttering to himself, but loud enough for Agnes to hear what he said, that there was nothing he so much detested as a crying wife.

He

He met Jutta upon the stairs ; and she, after expressing the pleasure his return, and seeing him well, gave her, said she hoped he had taken care of the key of the state bed-chamber.—“ For I am sorry to tell you, my Lord,” continued she, “ that the devil is broke loose again, and that the Matron has appeared to my Lady!—I’ll lay my life she has ; for I am certain she would not have asked for the key as often as she did, if she had not had some particular reason for doing so. I remember, your Honour, what a piece of work there was, when your mother, God rest her soul ! wanted to go into that same room ; it was a few months before her death :—your father would not give her the key ; but she, who had never in her life contradicted him before, insisted on having it. But nothing could prevail on him to grant



grant her request ; and he refused to give it her, although she even begged him to do so on her knees."

The mention of his mother's name made Ulrich start. "Let the dead rest," said he, "and make yourself easy about the key ;—I do not rightly recollect where I put it, but I am sure it is safe ; I will look for it by-and-by to satisfy you. But as for your nonsensical story about the ghost, I don't believe a word of it ; and even supposing I were foolish enough to do so, I should be as easy as I am now : for I am persuaded that it is not in the power of spirits to do either good or harm to any one."

Jutta crossed herself ; and, endeavouring to conceal her anger as much as she could, replied with all the moderation in her power, "I never in my life heard you, my Lord,  
nor

nor any one else, utter such wicked, profane words before. Alas! how is the world altered since I was young! God forgive you, my Lord, and send that my dear good Lady may not suffer on your account! And I hope the Blessed Virgin will prevent the danger your impiety exposes her to! But it will be shocking indeed if the Count of Pfyrst does not do all in his power to prevent his wife from falling a victim to the wicked Matron's fury!"

"Hum!" said the Count, suddenly turning from her. The thought which at that moment darted across his mind, was of a nature that disgraced humanity, and will be communicated to our readers in due time. We will only say at present, that it was the offspring of a passion that often rules the human mind with the most tyrannical and despotic sway.

*SHE*

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*SHE NEARLY FAINTED.*

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JUTTA was greatly out of humour at the Count's infidelity, as she termed it; as well as the little regard he shewed for his wife; and she muttered, grumbled, and quarrelled with every one that approached her, from morning to night. The thought of the Matron, and the hope that Agnes entertained of soon seeing her again, tranquilized her mind a little, and enabled her to support her misfortunes with more composure than she would otherwise have done. And as for Ulrich, his mind was continually engaged in trying to frame an excuse for leaving

leaving the castle, which he was preparing to do as soon as possible. When he took leave of Agnes, he informed her that he was going a long journey, to settle some business that made his presence absolutely necessary; that the time of his return was uncertain; and that he therefore desired she would not make herself uneasy on his account.

Agnes, deceived by the appearance of tenderness that he assumed, ventured to ask him for the key of her former bed-chamber;—he replied that he did not know where it was, but she might look for it amongst his other keys, and if she found it, she was at liberty to make what use of it she thought proper. Agnes, encouraged at the facility with which her first request was granted, asked him if he would allow her to change her apartments during his absence? He immediately complied

complied with her request, and added, that the castle, and every thing in it, were her's, and that she might change her room every day if she chose it. Agnes was so much affected by his kindness, that she threw her arms round his neck, kissed, and thanked him for it. Ulrich tore himself from her embraces as soon as he could, and hurried to Viria ; for the sight of her was necessary to make him forget the shameful part he had just acted. He pursued his journey with the greatest speed ; but although he did all in his power to drown reflection, he could not calm the perturbation of his mind ; and he was several times on the point of turning back to prevent the mischief that his conscience accused him of being the cause of. But the thought of Viria urged him to proceed. His evil genius prevailed, and he arrived



arrived at Ravensburg Castle, where the sight of Viria, who happened to be standing at a window, and who waved her lily hand to bid him welcome as he rode by, obliterated Agnes, and every thought that regarded her, from his mind.

As soon as Agnes was alone, she returned thanks to Heaven for having heard her prayer, and inclined her husband's heart to grant her wish. Her next business was to look for the key, for she had some suspicion that Ulrich had concealed it ;—but that thought did not give her much uneasiness ; for as he had permitted her to go into the room, she was determined, in case she could not find it, to have another made : but her fears on that account were without foundation, for she found it in the place where she had put it.

Agnes

Agnes shut the closet, and was leaving the room; but before she reached the door of it, Jutta (who was likewise going to look for the key, that she might hide it) entered. But Agnes meeting her, shewed her the key with exulting joy, and asked her if she would go with her?—It is impossible to describe Jutta's surprise and terror when she saw the key in her mistress's hand: she threw herself at her feet, clasped her knees, and in the most heart-rending accents begged of her to relinquish her design. But when tears and entreaties failed, she caught hold of Agnes's arm, and positively declared she should not go. Her frantic manner frightened Agnes, but it did not make her change her purpose.

Jutta's vociferation alarmed the family; and the steward of the household, a vene-

rable old man, went up stairs to enquire what was the matter. The room door was open, and he, unable to account for so strange a scene, and the wildness of Jutta's manner, remained at a distance, without knowing if it were proper for him to interfere in the dispute, or not. But as soon as Jutta perceived him, she called him to her; and in a voice that sobs and tears rendered almost inarticulate, she desired him to try to persuade her Lady not to go into the cursed, ill-fated room that the Matron haunted.

Detmond with some difficulty silenced her clamour; and as soon as the Countess was able to speak, she informed him of her design, and the permission her husband had given her. The old man smiled, called her intention to conquer prejudice a laudable one, and offered to assist her as much as was

in his power.—“ I have long,” said he, “ observed with sorrow the folly and superstition that reign in this family, and that the Matron, who I am persuaded was an ornament to it whilst living, should be hated and feared in the manner she now is : she never injured any person ; and I am certain, if we were permitted to examine the private records of the family that are kept in the archive, we should find that her life was exemplary.”

If Jutta's eyes had had the power of the basilisk's, Detmond would certainly have dropped down dead at her feet. Rage and wonder sealed her lips ; and it was some time before she could assign a reason in her own mind, that could account for his opposing her in an affair where reason and experience were so evidently on her side. Nor

would she have suffered him to proceed in his panegyric on the Matron without interruption, if the quick succession of ideas that darted across her mind had not prevented her attending to the greatest part of it ; and the only probable cause that there appeared to her for Detmond's baseness and perverseness, was his wish to revenge the affront of her having refused his hand two-and-thirty years before. Instead of love, she had at that time offered him her friendship, which he had accepted of. She had always fancied him her friend, but she now found her mistake ; and thanked God for having rescued her from such a malicious tyrant, who would rather sacrifice his innocent Lady, than miss the opportunity of shewing the hatred he bore her.

But



But Jutta, who was really attached to her mistress, finding the inevitable danger that she, in her opinion, was exposed to, was resolved to do all in her power to save her. She therefore endeavoured to conceal her just indignation, and with as much composure as she could assume, addressed her base persecutor in the following speech; but sobs and tears often interrupted her words, and her manner expressed anger, or rather contempt:—"I think, Master Detmond," said she, in a whining voice, "if the reason of your opposition is only to revenge yourself on me, I think—I think you might have found another opportunity of doing so before now. You surely needed not have fixed on one that so nearly concerns our dear, good lady, and will end in her ruin. Truly, truly, if I was to address eleven

thousand prayers to the eleven thousand virgins for you, I doubt of their being sufficient to expiate your cruelty to her, and ingratitude to me! Are you not ashamed of the hypocritical part you have acted so many years? I am sure I was always your friend, and never gave you any cause to complain of me. How have I deserved this treatment of you, Master Detmond? And why do you persecute a poor unfortunate maiden in the manner you do?"

Detmond was as ignorant of the reason of Jutta's complaints and upbraidings, as Adam was of the qualities of the apple that Eve gave him. He stared at her, asked her in what way he had offended her, and why she reproached him in the manner she did? But he persevered in advising the Countess to put her design into execution, and  
affured

assured her that she would not expose herself to the least danger by doing so.

That was more than Jutta could support, and her rage, which she had hitherto endeavoured to conceal, burst out with redoubled fury. "Savage! villain! barbarian! forcerer!" exclaimed she, "how darest thou take the Matron's part in my presence, knowing, as thou dost, that I am acquainted with her diabolical tricks? How darest thou advise thy Lady to trust herself in that fury's power, when thou knowest her life is forfeited if she does. Do not trust him, for God's sake do not trust his words," turning to the Countess, and bursting into a fresh deluge of tears; "for he only advises you, to revenge himself on me, because I refused to marry him above thirty years ago."

Detmond could not help smiling, and Agnes did all in her power to pacify Jutta; she told her that she had not time to enquire into the particulars of the story at present, but that as soon as she was settled in her new apartments, she and Detmond should relate it separately to her, and that she should then be better able to judge which of them was misled by fancy. She then desired Jutta to return to her own room, and try to compose herself, whilst she and Detmond went to look at the family pictures. She took hold of his arm as soon as she had pronounced the last words, and left the room.

Jutta attempted to renew her expostulations; but finding they were not attended to, she wrung her hands, tore her hair, and loudly complained that wickedness was  
allowed

allowed to triumph over virtue ; till at last, quite overpowered by the violence of her passions, she with difficulty staggered to a chair, and sinking into it, nearly fainted.

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*THE ABODE OF A SPIRIT.*

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THE Countess and Detmond entered the room, and found every thing in the nicest order. Agnes looked at the resemblances of her husband's ancestors with pleasure, but she contemplated the youthful and blooming charms of her friend with rapture. Whilst she was doing so, she frequently looked round to see if she were not there, and then



fixed her eyes upon the picture again, and, lifting up her hands in a supplicating manner, seemed to beg of her not to forsake her.

Detmond, who stood behind her, regarded her with pleasure. "Yes, yes," said he, "that is she herself. I never saw her in that dress, nor look so young as that picture does; but it is impossible to mistake the features. Look at them, honoured Lady; say, can a face like that deceive?—No," continued he, "she is the guardian angel of this family, sent from better regions, where she deserves to dwell, to protect it! And humane and good as she is, she hears herself slandered without attending to it, or punishing her calumniators. I can hardly conceal my anger when I hear her accused, as she always is, as the cause of every misfortune that happens in the family."

Detmond's

Detmond's words were music to Agnes's ear; her heart sympathized with the good old man's, and she prized herself happy in having found a person whose sentiments corresponded with her own. "Detmond," said she, "what situation is that wing of the castle in? Is it in such a ruinous state that much time and expence will be required to make it habitable?"

"It is habitable," said he; and, guessing the Countess's intention, he looked at her with increased satisfaction, and continued-- "Is it possible that you possess sufficient strength of mind to conquer idle fear, to afford comfort to an unhappy spirit, and expose yourself to the frequent sight of it without shuddering?"

"Yes, I can: nay more, Detmond, know it is my wish and intention to do so."

“ If that be the case, you may enter those apartments without the least dread; you will find them elegant, neat, and commodious; you will be delighted with the beautiful prospect they command, which so many of your predecessors wished, but were not allowed, to enjoy. Take possession of your rightful inheritance, and be assured that no wicked deeds were ever perpetrated in them; they have always hitherto been the abode of virtuous wives, tender mothers, and good mistresses. As for the Matron, do not let her presence alarm you, for I am persuaded she seeks some kindred mind to unbosom herself to;—God send you may be the person! And I am strengthened in the hope I entertain of your being so, by the knowledge I have of several of the former Countesses of Pfyrst and those of Momplegard being

being intimate friends.—I believe some great discovery is reserved for you.”

He then offered the Countess his hand, and with the other held back the tapestry-hanging, opened the door, and led her into a light, pleasant, and well-aired room :—the furniture was antique ; but as the fashion did not vary so often in that age as it does now, the space of a century did not make so great a difference as it would in our enlightened times.

But what really surprised Agnes most of all, was the extreme neatness and cleanliness that were visible in every part of the room ; every thing in it was polished as bright as a looking-glass, nor was the least speck of dust to be seen any where. Two small beds of extraordinary beauty stood in an alcove ; the sheets and pillow-cases were as fine

fine as cambric, and instead of seams, they were joined with such curious needlework, that it would not have lost had it been compared to our present *point d'Alençon*. The embroidery of the satin counterpane was so fresh and beautiful, that, instead of shewing marks of age, it looked as if it were just taken out of the frame ; the cushions of the chairs were the same as the quilt ; and the *tout ensemble* of the room was so pleasing, that Agnes declared she had never in her life been in one she liked so well, and that it was, without exception, the finest in the castle. The adjoining room was hung with blue tapestry, and pleased her as well as the first ; but they were both eclipsed by the beauty of the third, or, as it was called, the balcony room : it was hung with green silk, in which were wove trees, bushes, and flowers with so much



much art, that Agnes at first fancied herself in a garden. The floor was covered with a green carpet, wrought in a like curious manner; and so great was the deception, that she was almost afraid to tread on it, lest her feet might crush the roses, or bend the grass that seemed to sink under them. The balcony was built in such a manner that it concealed the windows, and yet admitted sufficient light to favour the imposition. Even the form of the tables, chairs, and other furniture that were in the room tended to increase it, for their shape was exactly the same as those that commonly were made use of in gardens. The vaulted ceiling resembled the sky, and the warbling inhabitants of the air seemed to cut the ether asunder with their fluttering wings.

But

But the beautiful prospect that the windows commanded, was what delighted Agnes most. She had often silently regretted that the pleasantest side of the castle was uninhabited ; and if it had not been for the disagreeable restraint she lived in, and the little harmony there was between her and her husband, she would certainly have desired him to have had those rooms repaired long before she saw them. The balcony afforded the richest and most romantic prospect she had ever seen ; on one side was Basle, on the other the chain of mountains that enclosed Minsterdale, and in front part of the fertile valley itself, with a view of the river Rhine and its fruitful environs, crowded with villages, plains, rivulets, stately castles, humble cottages, herds of cattle, and shepherds with their flocks, that her wondering eye surveyed

veyed "the wide immeasurable space" with rapturous astonishment. Agnes thanked the Matron for having fulfilled her wish in such an unexpected manner, and hoped her future days would glide on in tranquillity and content.

She immediately ordered all the fastenings to be removed from the outside of the doors belonging to that wing, and to have them new painted, that they might correspond with the rest of the castle : she then ordered every thing that belonged to her to be brought into those rooms, for she was determined to remove into them directly.

Every body stared, and looked aghast with horror when they were informed of Agnes's intention ; but they were not less surprised at the uncommon beauty of the apartments when they summoned up resolution enough

to

to enter them. But it was a considerable time before Jutta could be prevailed on to do so; and before she ventured to pass the threshold, she crossed herself, and muttered a number of Ave Marias and exorcisms. She was, however, the first who declared that the Countess must be a particular favourite of Heaven; that her being preserved in the wonderful manner she was, was little less than a miracle; but that it was wrong to tempt the Almighty, and that, for her part, she wished every thing might end as well as it began.

But no persuasion was powerful enough to induce her to pass the night in either of the rooms, and she resigned the care of her Lady as soon as the evening approached, to a young person, whose name was Rosa; she was an innocent country girl that the  
Countess

Countess had lately taken into her service; but during the short time she had lived with her, she had on several occasions proved the disinterested affection she felt for her mistress, who in her heart greatly preferred her to the boisterous and meddling Jutta.

Rosa did not make the least objection to remain with Agnes, but with the most perfect good humour took possession of a small room contiguous to her bed-chamber, as Detmond did of another on the other side of it; but he, being fearful that Rosa's courage might forsake her when she was alone, fetched his mother, who was near a hundred years of age, to sleep with her. Ludmilla did not live at the castle, but inhabited a neat little cottage at the foot of the mountain on which it stood; she was revered and esteemed by the whole neighbourhood, partly



partly on account of her great age, but chiefly for the excellency of her character and disposition. Even Ulrich sometimes called on her when he passed her habitation, but Agnes had neither seen, nor even heard her name mentioned till that evening; but whether that was owing to Ludmilla, who perhaps at her advanced age did not wish to appear in the young Countess's presence, or to Ulrich, (who knew she was informed of many things that he probably did not wish his wife to know) ordering Detmond not to let her come to the castle, is uncertain. Agnes was therefore not a little surprised to see a neat old woman in the anti-chamber, who approached, and respectfully kissed her hand as soon as she entered it. She looked at Detmond, who said it was his mother, and that he had fetched

fetches her to pass the night with Rosa, who perhaps, although she would not own it, might be afraid to sleep alone.

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*THE INVISIBLE ATTENDANT.*

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AGNES, not ringing her bell at the usual hour the next morning, greatly alarmed Rosa and Detmond; and yet they did not venture to go into her room without being called. Ludmilla went away at the dawn of day; when she told Rosa, who invited her to stay to breakfast, it was impossible, for she had some business to do that she durst not neglect.

Rosa

Rosa walked about the room for some time, and at last went to the window, where she anxiously waited for her Lady's summons, and saw Jutta, whose room was on the other side of the court-yard, just opposite her's, peeping through a crevice of the window shutter, to see if she could discover what was passing in the other side of the house. Jutta had passed a miserable night ; for although the uneasiness she suffered the preceding day on her Lady's account, had a little abated towards evening, it returned with augmented violence as midnight approached, and lasted without intermission the whole night ; for she had not the least doubt of the Matron, whom she regarded as the devil in human form, having murdered the Countess, and that she would be found dead in her bed, with the marks of his  
clutches

clutches on her throat. But her fears were without foundation ; for Agnes had slept tranquilly, and awoke in the morning in perfect health, with a mind more at ease than it had been for a considerable time. The reason of its being so, shall soon be communicated to our readers.

Agnes awoke that morning rather earlier than her usual time of rising ; and unwilling to disturb Rosa, and yet longing to enjoy the fine prospect, she left her bed, and hurrying on some of her clothes, went through the blue room into the tapestry one ; but how great was her surprise when she opened the door, instead of finding the room empty, to see Ludmilla at the farther end of it, dusting and rubbing the furniture ! Agnes was certain she had locked the door the evening before ; and as there was only  
one

one in the room, she could not possibly conceive by what means the old woman had entered it. If she had not seen her before, she certainly would have taken her for a spirit; but she knew her, and approaching her, enquired how she came in? Her answer, although such as Agnes little expected, was satisfactory, and accounted for several things that had before seemed mysterious to her.

“ Know, honoured Lady,” said Ludmilla, “ that about sixty years ago—it was just a week after I was brought to bed of Detmond, the Matron, whom you, without doubt, have heard mentioned, appeared to me in the house I still live in; it is not far from the castle—the first you come to on the left hand side: I dare say you know it—it was new tiled two years ago. And so, as I was  
going



going to say Detmond was about a week old, when I was waked very early one morning by a strange rustling by my bed-side. I started up in my bed, thinking it was a cat that had by some means got into the room; and being afraid of cats, I was a good deal frightened. But I was mistaken; for instead of a cat, I saw the Matron standing close to me. She beckoned me to follow her: it was some time before I could determine to do so; but the mildness of her looks, and her supplicating manner, at last got the better of my fears; and thinking I should do a good deed, and perhaps gain a powerful friend, I determined to go with her, and see what she wanted of me. I got up, dressed, and wrapped myself in a warm cloak; and after kissing my smiling infant, I told her I was ready. She went to the

cradle, looked at the child, and bending over it, seemed to kiss it. Her doing so increased the confidence she had before inspired me with, and convinced me that I did not run any risk by obeying her commands. I locked my door, and followed her through a long dark passage, till we came to a narrow flight of stairs: we went up them; at the top there was a small door; she opened it, and we entered this apartment—Look, here is the door and the stairs!” pushing back the hangings, and shewing them to Agnes.—‘Ludmilla,’ said she, ‘I am in need of thy assistance, which I hope thou wilt not refuse to an unfortunate, forsaken, and solitary being: the service that I require is trifling, and will only detain thee about half-an-hour every morning.

‘I am

‘ I am the being that is known by the name of the Restless Matron of Pfyrt. My business on earth—where I go to, and from whence I come, the destiny that awaits me, and the reason of my soul not being at rest, are circumstances that do not concern thee, and which thou art not to enquire about. My fate, till lately, was less insupportable than it is at present; for the company of the Countesses of Pfyrt lessened the bitterness of it: but even that trifling consolation is now denied me, for they have forsaken me. Ah! why do they do so? Why forsake and reject me at a time when they are most in need of my assistance and advice?—I am now become an object of contempt and hatred; and to banish me from their sight, and, if possible, from their thoughts, the Lords of this castle are determined to let this wing

of it remain uninhabited ! But my regrets are more on their account than my own ;— it is they who are in need of my advice, not I of their's. Besides, if I chose to pursue them, they could not fly from me ; for I can range about the whole castle, and go wherever else I chuse. But why should I seek those who hate the sight of me, and dread my approach ? No, I will content myself with watching them unseen, and doing all in my power to add to their felicity, without letting them know that they are obliged to me for it. But let me now inform thee what I require of thee. This, as thou knowest, is the dwelling assigned me ; for the future, or at least for many years, no human feet will enter it, and as it is not in my power to employ myself with menial offices, I wish thee to keep it clean, and in the same order as

it

it is in at present. Thou mayst demand what reward thou wilt for thy trouble ; it shall be given thee, for there is a hidden treasure in this castle, that will not easily be exhausted ; I will shew it to thee some time or other."

Agnes listened to Ludmilla, although her manner of relating was slow and rather tiresome, with the most profound attention ; and when she stopped, she desired her to proceed, and tell her every circumstance, even the most trifling, that occurred to her. Ludmilla then informed the Countess of her having attended the Matron into the vaults and private cellars of the castle ; that she had ordered her to take some gold and silver from the stores that lay heaped up in them, but that the Matron herself did not touch any thing, except a ring that appeared to



be of trifling value ; that she looked earnestly at the ring, and seemed to weep ; that she some time after laid it in the place she had taken it from ; and that during the time of their acquaintance, she had several times taken it away, and brought it back again. She concluded her relation with saying, that the only wish she had ever formed for her son was, that he might have the place he at present occupied ; because the former steward was such a worthy man, that the peasants never passed him without pulling off their hats, and that Knights and Barons familiarly shook his hand, and were not ashamed to call him, friend. That when Detmond was grown to man's estate, the old steward died ; and on her expressing her wish to her friend, she had told her what measures she must take to interest the Count  
of

of Pfyrt in her son's favour : they succeeded, and her son was what she had always wished him to be—loved by the poor, and esteemed by the great. That the only uneasiness she had ever felt on his account, was caused by Jutta refusing his hand ; but that Heaven had punished her for her pride and avarice : for she at that time had another in view, who had afterwards forsaken her, and as a punishment, had doomed her to a continual state of virginity.

Ludmilla, after recommending the most profound secrecy to the Countess, kissed her hand, and slipped down the back stairs ; and Agnes returned to her bed-chamber, and rung the bell for her attendants.

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*THE SURPRISE.*

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ROSA was not a little astonished at finding the rooms in such perfect order, and that there was nothing left for her to do. She remembered how littered and dirty she had left them the evening before, owing to the moving of her Lady's clothes and other effects ; but now, if she had looked herself blind, she could not have discovered the least particle of dust, or any thing out of its place. She was, however, far from being pleased at the officiousness of those who had done her work for her ; and her countenance expressed the surprise as well as the vexation

it

it occasioned her, which Agnes perceiving, she ordered Detmond to tell Jutta she was alive, and that she might come to her without exposing herself to the least danger; and then turning to Rosa, said, "Remember, my dear Rosa, that we now live with spirits."

"I know we do," replied she; "but I wish they would leave my work alone; I don't want their assistance—I had much rather do it myself: I shall for the future be afraid to move a chair, or to touch any thing, for fear of offending them; for who knows if they be malicious spirits, or not? I shall live in continual apprehension. I wish I had remained in Minsterdale, and desired the good old gentleman to take me to wait on Lina."

The mention of Lina's name made Agnes start. "Do you know Lina?" said she. "And who is the old gentleman you just mentioned? Tell me all you know about them, my dear Rosa; and I promise you that I will do all in my power to prevent either mortal or spirit interfering in your business again."

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*PAINFUL RECOLLECTION.*

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IF Agnes had passed the night as solitarily as our silence possibly inclines our readers to imagine, it is hardly probable that the mention of Lina's name would have engaged her attention so much as it did; but she



she had heard her named recently, and in a manner which excited her curiosity, that it is no wonder the unexpected repetition of the name made her start.

Agnes, who seldom went to bed earlier than twelve, had dismissed her attendants at eleven o'clock the preceding night. But instead of retiring to rest, as she told Rosa she intended doing, she locked the outward door, and opened that which led to the balcony-room, with the intention of going into it, and waiting there till her friend arrived. But she had only advanced a few steps when she saw her at a distance coming towards her in her usual plain attire. They met in the middle of the blue tapestry room. Agnes expressed the satisfaction her appearance gave her; but she at the same time remarked that the Matron's features were stamped

with a deeper melancholy than she had ever before observed, and she entreated her to tell her if she were the cause of it, or if she had been unfortunate enough to offend her; and assured her if she had, it was undesignedly. "I don't know, my dear Agnes," replied the Patroness of the Pfyrt family, "how thou couldst offend me or any one else;—for gentleness beams from thy eye; thy heart is good, thy mind compassionate, and thy hand ever ready to relieve the distressed of others. Do not suppose, because I was a stranger to thee the first time thou sawest me, that thou wast so to me;—no, I had long been acquainted with thy worth; and as soon as I perceived that the Lord of Pfyrt intended to marry, I wished his choice might fall on Agnes of Momplegard.

"Thou

“Thou must not make thyself uneasy, my dear child, if thou sometimes seest me with a furrowed brow; when thou doest, thou mayst conclude that I have seen or heard something that vexes me. I am just returned from visiting Minsterdale, where I saw a worthy man, and his niece Lina; but a momentary sight of the dear child was all I could obtain.— But now let me inform thee why I desired thee to inhabit these apartments; and I beg of thee to listen attentively to what I am going to say.—A curse has rested on the wives of the elder branch of the family of Pfyrt for a great number of years, and their being delivered of a daughter in any place except this wing of the castle, will, till the malediction is removed, always occasion the mother’s death! Thou hast seen the portraits of the many unfortunate females, and  
their

their equally unfortunate offspring ! Alas ! my dear Agnes, truth obliges me to say that I was the cause, although the innocent one, of their misfortunes ;—painful recollection ! cruel, cruel thought ! Each widower never omitted having his departed wife's picture copied and added to the number of her predecessors ;—a strange and senseless custom, that prevented the misfortunes of the family from sinking into oblivion. The wives always enquired what the fate of the persons those pictures represented was, and why they were delineated in that extraordinary manner ? The husbands had not prudence enough to conceal from their knowledge the fate that awaited them, nor courage to let them use the only means that could have prevented it. It was my unhappy destiny to appear and warn them all ; but prejudiced

diced as they were against me, it is no wonder that my presence accelerated the evil it was meant to prevent, and that my hopes and wishes were not realized. Their husband's relation frightened, my appearance terrified them, and they avoided instead of seeking my presence. The daughters, from their birth, were the objects of their fathers' hatred; ill treatment and unmerited reproaches hardened their hearts, and corrupted their minds, made them obstinate, malicious, and vicious, and in the end proved their ruin. But let me hasten over this mournful part of my story, and return to that which concerns thee. Every mother trembled when the time of her delivery approached; and the thought of death, that continually haunted her mind during her pregnancy, frequently caused the infant's death before



before its birth. But when that was not the case, and the agonies of childbirth were happily over, if the joyful acclamation, 'It is a son!' did not recal the mother's fainting spirit, the next breath she drew was her last!"

Tears rolled down Agnes's cheeks at this mournful relation; the Matron desired her to dry them, and then continued—"Try to forget the past," said she, "and be assured that they are rewarded for the unmerited sufferings they endured in this world; it was a destiny they could not avoid. Sorrow is the lot of mortals; but in a future state they will be rewarded for what they suffered in this. How consoling is the thought to me, who, although no longer a mortal, am doomed to feel anguish and misery, that the happy hour which will free me  
from

from both is at no great distance, and that thou art the person who will relieve me from some part of the grievous burden that oppresses me ! I have many things to relate to thee, my dear daughter ; but as I have time enough to do so, it would be wrong to engage thy attention too much at present, as it might prove prejudicial to thy health. I shall therefore now conclude ; but before I leave thee, I hope thou wilt remove the apprehensions I feel on thy account, by assuring me that what I have just related will not make thee dread the time of thy delivery."

" I do not dread it, my dear mother," replied Agnes, " indeed I do not ; what reason have I to do so, knowing, as I do, that our appointed time is in the hand of God, and that it is not in my power to alter the decrees

decrees of Eternal Wisdom ? Besides, why should I fear death, which I am certain is the beginning of a state of bliss infinitely superior to any this world can bestow ? I look forward to the period you mention with pleasure, for I am convinced you will favour me with your advice and assistance whenever I am in need of them ; and I know Count Ulrich's pleasure will equal mine, when I inform him what has happened to me. How glad I am that it is in my power to relieve his mind from the anxiety it suffers on my account ; for although he endeavoured to conceal it from me the last time he was here, the agitation he was in, and the restless discontent that appeared in every thing he said or did, which I could at that time no ways account for, was, I am now fully persuaded, occasioned by the uneasiness my situation gave him.

him. I will write to him to-morrow, and inform him what a pleasing prospect I have, and that he has nothing more to fear on my account."

The Matron did not make any objection to her doing so; but Agnes in vain endeavoured to prevail on her to stay another hour with her. "Thou art in need of rest, Agnes," was her reply; "and in thy situation it is a duty incumbent on thee to be particularly careful of thyself; for remember thy child's health depends on thine. If my prayer be heard, thou wilt be the person in whose power it will be to eradicate the evil that has taken such deep root in this family. Therefore good night, my dear child; I hope thou wilt sleep undisturbed in my habitation; thou art the first mortal who has ventured to repose in it these many, many

many years. I hope care, and every corroding thought will fly far from thy pillow; and if it be in my power to create pleasing dreams, thy sleeping fancy will swim in a sea of delight. If I were permitted to guard thee, I would not stir from thy side; but that pleasure is denied me. Farewell! may every good befall thee!"

The Matron's wish was fulfilled: Agnes slept undisturbed, waked refreshed, and hailed the rising sun as the harbinger of a happy day.



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*THE GOOD OLD GENTLEMAN.*

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“THE good old gentleman,” said the blushing Rosa, who was not a little pleased at the familiarity with which her Lady treated her, “lives in Minsterdale; he is the owner of it; for the river, the mountains, the herds, and cottages, all, all belong to him.” Rosa, whilst she was speaking, withdrew one of her hands from Agnes, and made a pantomimic motion of a large circle with it. There was something so innocent and natural in her manner of relating, that it pleased Agnes extremely; and she drew Rosa with the hand she still held towards a couch, and

seating herself upon it, made a motion to Rosa to do the same, and said, "But you have not told me his name?"

"We call him Master, or the good old Gentleman," replied she; "but I have heard say he is a Nobleman, and that his right name is Count of Pfyrt. But let that be as it will, he neither appears great, nor behaves stately to us; if he did, we should not love him half so well as we do, for our hearts jump with joy whenever we see him. Although he has a fine castle, he lives in a small thatched house in the valley, that is not much larger nor better than our cottages; but his garden—Oh I wish you could see it!—is beautiful indeed. He seldom goes to his castle, except on rainy Sundays, when he lets us dance in the great hall, which, when the weather is fine, we always do upon  
the

the grass-plat before his house. He either rebuilt or repaired all our cottages, which, during the late owner's life, were entirely fallen to decay ; for he lived a great way off, and never troubled his head about his poor dependants, but spent his time in fighting, feasting, and hunting ; the last was the cause of his death, for in endeavouring to leap a precipice, his horse fell into it, and he broke his neck. But our present master does not imitate his example, for he often visits our poor habitations, and enquires in what manner he can be useful to us ; and although he is immensely rich, and a Lord in the bargain, he does not dress like one, but just as we do."

"Lina, I suppose, is his daughter?" said Agnes, interrupting her.

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"That cannot be," replied Rosa, tittering, "for he is not married."

"Was he never married, Rosa?"

"I do not know; but if he even was, Lina cannot be his daughter, for she is very young, and he lived in the valley a great many years before she was born; therefore, if he ever was married, his wife must have been dead before he came, for I never heard her mentioned."

By Rosa's account it was plain that Lina must be his foster-child; and as Agnes had not the least doubt of her being Ulrich's sister, she felt herself warmly interested in her favour, and was determined not to rest until she had prevailed on her husband to let her live with them.—Unhappy Agnes! with what pleasing dreams didst thou lull thy mind! and how soon, how cruelly  
were

were thy hopes frustrated ! Agnes felt a thousand presentiments of approaching happiness, but none of the misfortunes that awaited her. What a blessing it is that the human mind has generally a greater propensity to hope than fear, and that the hours, which precede calamity, glide away so calmly as they do ! For what agonizing pangs should we suffer, and how would every comfort of life be embittered, could we see one step beyond the present moment !

Rosa, finding her Lady inclined to listen to her, would most likely have lengthened her relation ; but just as she was enumerating Lina's good qualities, and how fond every body was of her, which would have proved endless subjects, she was interrupted by Jutta coming into the room in a flow and timid manner.



She, however, darted a look at Rosa, which plainly expressed her disapprobation of the familiar position she found her in. Rosa had too often heard Jutta harangue on the duties of respect and subordination that were due to her superiors, to mistake the meaning of her look; she therefore rose from her seat, and after respectfully kissing her Lady's hand, withdrew herself to a humble distance.

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*THE IMPERIAL COURT.*

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WHEN Count Ulrich left Ravensburg Castle, it was his intention to return to it again very soon with Agnes, and to invite Viria to Pfyrt Castle. But his wife's pregnancy changed his plan, and was the excuse he framed for returning without her ; for at that time ladies in her situation seldom travelled. The company wished him joy on the prospect he had of an increase of family, and added their hopes that the birth of a son and heir would crown his wishes. They all, except Viria, expressed their real sentiments ; but her heart contradicted what her lips

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uttered,

uttered, nor would she have heard the account with the composure she did, if she had not had a previous *tête-à-tête* with the Count.

Ulrich had rightly interpreted the meaning of her waving her hand at him as he rode past her window. He immediately dismounted, gave his horse to his servant, walked up the castle hill, and was fortunate enough to reach her room without being seen by any person. Viria flew to meet him, and rushed into his arms as soon as he entered; but, seeming to recollect herself the moment after, she started back, and looked at him with a countenance so expressive of sorrow, that it greatly abated the raptures the lover felt the moment before. But his eyes remained steadfastly rivetted on her's; for the deadly poison they had imparted, worked

worked too powerfully for any thing to repel its force.—“ Forgive my weakness, Count,” said she in a soft and tremulous voice, “ forgive me ; and be assured that I hate myself for giving way to it. Cruel, cruel Fate ! Why, Oh ! why were you married before I saw you ? And why must my perverse and wayward heart reject every one but you ?—you, who have no longer a hand to offer—a hand that I would have accepted of with transport. Why did my unfortunate destiny lead me into this country, where harder trials than those I was before exposed to, awaited me ?—The mortifications of humbled pride are great !—to be deprived of a father’s love by a malicious step-mother, to be obliged to leave a Court where I was loved and admired, and forced to seek that protection in a strange country that my own

denied me, was hard, very hard indeed ! but the attempt to combat passion without the possibility of succeeding, and to endure the rankling stings that fester in the heart, are harder still !—to live without hope, without——”

“ Cease your complaints which rend my heart, most adorable of your sex,” said Ulrich, interrupting her, “ and listen to the sorrows of him who suffers a thousand times more than you do. If you are obliged to suppress a rising inclination, and damp a spark that I would willingly fan into a flame, you are free. Absence and amusements may erase the remembrance of me from your mind, and a new impression may in time entirely obliterate the former one. You are bound by no ties, nor obliged to live with a person you cannot love ; but I——

To



To see and adore you was the same thing. At first I endeavoured to persuade myself that I was merely dazzled with your charms, and that my love would cease as soon as I was at a distance from you.—When I offered my hand to Agnes, I thought it impossible for any one to exceed her in beauty, and bade defiance to the whole world to produce one whose charms equalled her's. I left you, and returned home with the expectation that the sight of my wife would efface your remembrance, and restore my lost repose. Vain hope ! for I now find that my peace of mind is lost for ever ! Had Agnes proved barren, I could have alledged that as an excuse for disliking and repudiating her ; but at present the latter is impossible."

Ulrich's manner of reasoning was not exactly what Viria wished to hear, for, in her

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opinion

opinion, he was too conscientious; and when conscience is capable of stifling the voice of passion, vice finds many difficulties to encounter before it succeeds in entirely vitiating the heart. But Viria was too great an adept in the art of seduction to be easily intimidated, and she determined to succeed let the consequences be what they would.

To rekindle the spark of love in Ulrich's heart, which she fancied was beginning to expire, she threw back her veil, with which she had before concealed her face. Her artifice succeeded, for the sight of her uncommon beauty set Ulrich's passions in a blaze, which consumed every thought that honour and humanity had before suggested; and Viria was obliged to call pride to her assistance, and assume a dignity which she could command whenever she pleased, to prevent

prevent Ulrich taking liberties, which, instead of love, might have made her an object of contempt.

Ulrich, probably ashamed of his baseness, concealed from Viria the dark and cruel thought that filled his mind when he left home, and which the knowledge of his wife's situation suggested—that the Matron, who had murdered so many mothers, would likewise free him from the obstacle that opposed his wishes. It is true that he had at first endeavoured to combat a thought so repugnant to nature; but as his resistance was feeble, it is no wonder that the sight of Viria, and the arts she made use of to inflame his mind, succeeded, and that that which at first was only a thought, soon became a hope. The more he reflected on every circumstance, the more he was persuaded that the

event he so ardently desired, would happen ; and he anticipated in idea the happy moment when the joyful news of Agnes's death would greet his ear. The child, which he had no doubt would be a girl, was to be sent to his uncle, whose fostering arms he was certain would open to receive it. He had never embraced his sister, but he was determined to fold his daughter to his bosom, and give her a parting kiss and his blessing before he sent her away.

Viria's penetrating eye soon discovered that something pleasing passed in Ulrich's mind, but she, for prudential reasons, forbore to enquire what it was; and they soon after discussed the question, if, in their situation, it was criminal for them to love, to their mutual satisfaction.

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As soon as that important point was settled, they consulted what means they should use to see each other frequently, and without restraint. Many methods were proposed, and rejected ; and at last, after mature consideration, it was determined that they would meet at the Imperial Court ; for the Knights and Ladies assembled at Ravensburg Castle, having nothing else to do (it being just at the time that the peace between the Emperors Albert and Adolphus had taken place after a long and bloody war), might employ themselves with watching them, and discover what they, for very cogent reasons, wished to remain a profound secret. Ulrich, although he endeavoured to persuade himself that his passion was not a guilty one, knew that others would not think as he did ; and if it were discovered,



which it certainly would be if they remained there, it was probable that the high sense of honour that he knew some of the company entertained, might make them take Agnes's part, and resent the injury he did her. Nor would Viria's lovers tamely submit to his snatching the valuable prize from them; nor could he bear the thought of being exposed to the prying eye of curiosity, and the sarcastic remarks he should be obliged to hear. Besides, Mompiegard was at no great distance, and it was possible that the old Count, or his son, might visit Agnes, and perhaps call at Ravensburg Castle as they passed it; he therefore, by remaining there, ran the risk of being called to account for his conduct, and perhaps exposed himself to the danger of a challenge: and his sword had rested quietly in its sheath so long, that he  
had

had no inclination to draw it again. He was therefore particularly careful not to betray himself, and avoided Viria as much as he could, without seeming to do so intentionally. When they met, he treated her with politeness and respect, without ever assuming the least degree of familiarity. He seemed delighted with the thought of soon becoming a father, and frequently mentioned the hope he entertained of being blessed with a son.

A few days after his arrival, he received a letter which, as he informed the company, obliged him to go to the frontiers of Hungary, to settle an unhappy difference that had happened betwixt two friends, whom he equally esteemed; and he hoped his interposition would prevail on them to do so in an amicable manner. His intention was commended;

mended ; and Ulrich left Ravensburg Castle without any person suspecting the understanding that reigned between him and Viria ; and she, still more versed in the arts of cunning and deceit than Ulrich, bestowed so many kind looks and flattering assurances on her train of admirers, that each fancied himself the happy man, and pitied the rest ;—of course the Count of Pfyrt, as already bound in Hymen's chains, was not thought of.

A few weeks after Ulrich's departure, some unexpected intelligence that Viria received from her native country, made her presence there indispensibly necessary ; but she promised to return to Switzerland again very soon, for she declared she preferred that country to every other. As there were some reasons, that she was not at present at liberty  
to

to explain, that made her travelling incognita necessary, she could not possibly accept of the gentlemen's offer of escorting her further than the confines of Switzerland. After they had taken leave of her, she, to deceive them, in case they should be prompted by curiosity to follow her, pursued the route she had said she intended taking; but as soon as she found that her fears on that account were vain, she turned back, and chose another road.

Nurenberg was the town where the Emperor Albert kept his Court, and where at that time a Diet was held, which was more numerously attended, and exceeded in magnificence any of the former ones. The King of Bohemia, the Elector of the Palatinate, above fifty Bishops, and a hundred Princes and Knights, and Nobles out of number

were assembled there ;—the town could hardly contain them ; and they all vied with each other in state, and the splendour of the entertainments they gave.

The gaiety that reigned at Nurenberg was exactly adapted to Viria's taste ; for a constant succession of amusements, a crowd of lovers dangling about her, and to be flattered by the men, and envied by the women, was what she loved.

Count Ulrich had arrived some time before her, and he was happy to find but few of his acquaintance there ;—for the Swiss, who wisely prefer their own country, are not so much addicted to rambling as other nations ; and the Abbots and Nobles, who had taken an active part in the war between Albert and Adolphus, went to Nurenberg previous to their returning home. Some of  
them



them did not know that Ulrich was married ; and those that did, happening to be prudent persons, who did not chuse to trouble themselves about other people's affairs, said nothing about it.

The fame of Viria's beauty reached Nurenberg before she arrived, and Ulrich's pride was not a little gratified at it, as well as his being certain that she far exceeded what report said about her. He examined all the ladies with a scrutinizing eye, and discovered with pleasure that not one of the numerous beauties there assembled, could be compared to her. As soon as she arrived, the undisputed palin of beauty was assigned her ; and the elegance of her form, her graceful deportment, the lustre of her eyes, the keenness of her wit, and the irresistible charm that attended every thing she said or did,

was

was the general topic of conversation. Nor could Viria conceal the pleasure she felt in moving in the sphere she was accustomed to, and loved. Her insinuating manners recommended her to the Empress's favour, who distinguished her on several occasions. Viria was the goddess of the day; wherever she appeared, a crowd of noble youths was assembled about her, and paid homage to her charms: the minstrels sung her praise; and no entertainment was thought complete that the angelic Viria did not grace with her presence.

The pomp and state with which Ulrich made his *entrée* into Nurenberg, was such as but few of the other Nobles could boast of: he had taken care to provide himself with some of the treasures that his forefathers, who were economists, had hoarded  
up.

up. To prevent his motions being traced, he had sent back the servants he took with him to Ravensburg Castle, and had sent for the numerous retinue he had with him from two other estates he possessed in distant parts of the country, who were entirely ignorant of what passed at Pfyrt Castle; and the articles of luxury that he could not take with him, he purchased at Nuremberg. Every thing was ready for Viria's reception before she came. The day of her arrival, servants were sent to watch her approach, and to give the Count notice of it, that he might meet and conduct her to a lodging that was prepared for her in a village a few leagues from the town, that fatigue might not diminish her charms, nor prevent her full enjoyment of the magnificent banquet that he intended giving to welcome her.

Viria

Viria appeared at it in the full splendour of beauty, and was delighted at the admiration she met with. She particularly attracted the attention of the Bishops of Worms and Spier, who had never in their lives agreed in any thing before ; but they now unanimously declared that Viria was by far the finest woman in the room. The French Ambassador, who was a Prince of the blood, and famous for his gallantries, did all in his power to make himself agreeable to her. The night was spent in feasting, dancing, and revelling : but Ulrich was not quite so happy as he expected to be, for a jealous pang sometimes darted across his mind. He watched Viria very attentively ; but whenever their eyes met, her's, in a language he perfectly understood, assured him that his fears were vain : and she indeed did all in  
her

her power to avoid giving him offence ; for, although polite to all, she did not shew the least preference to any, and Ulrich was the only one on whom she bestowed distinguished marks of favour. But if it were owing to her really loving him, or if her vanity were gratified by having the richest lover, who squandered away immense sums on her account, is difficult to determine ; but they were satisfied with themselves, and with each other ; for Viria's beauty was without a competitor, and every one declared that the entertainments given by the Count of Pfyrt exceeded the rest in taste and splendour.

LETTERS.



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*LETTERS.*

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DURING the time that Ulrich was engaged in this life of voluptuousness, riot, and dissipation, and lavishing away, with senseless prodigality, the sums that his ancestors had accumulated for nobler purposes, a messenger arrived from Pfyrt Castle, and delivered a letter to him:—the superscription he knew to be Agnes's writing; for among the many rare qualifications she possessed, those of writing a fine hand, and expressing herself in an elegant and accurate style, were not the least. Had the letter been delivered to him in Viria's presence, it probably would have

have fallen a victim to the flames unread : but Ulrich was alone when the messenger arrived, and as soon as he saw the letter, he snatched it out of the man's hand, looked at it, hesitated a moment, then hastily broke the seal, and read as follow:—

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*“ My dear and much-esteemed Ulrich,*

“ The pain the information you gave me when we parted, that your absence from home would be long, was considerably increased by your letter from Ravensburg Castle ; for it was impossible that your intention of going to such a distant country as Hungary could give me pleasure. For living separated from those we truly esteem, is always painful ; and the greater the distance is, the more acute the pain must be. Judge then, loving you as I do, how much I  
must

must suffer on your account, particularly as the reason you assign for going there, seems to threaten being attended with danger to yourself. Heaven send that the apprehensions I feel may be vain! But indeed at times I suffer dreadfully; nor should I ever enjoy a moment's repose if I did not rely on Providence for your protection—that Providence which has likewise sent a comforter to me, whose soothing voice cheers my solitude, affords me consolation on your account, and encourages me to look forward to futurity with confidence and hope, which, if I were to trust to the suggestions of my own heart, I should do with despair. Without her I should be quite alone; for I do not reckon the company that are continually coming and going, it not being in their power to make up your loss to me for a single moment;

moment ; and I never feel more alone than when I am with persons whose conversation does not interest me. But the want of society is what I complain of least, for you know I love retirement : and if it were not on your account, who I know wish to live in a manner suitable to your birth and fortune, I should often alledge indisposition as an excuse for not admitting company. You, my much-loved Lord, and the worthy Matron, are all the company I desire.

“ The last mentioned name will, I am certain, surprise you, my dear Ulrich ; for you have imbibed all the deep-rooted prejudices of your ancestors. And perhaps you will tremble at the moment you read this, with the apprehension of the danger your Agnes is exposed to, and blame her temerity in seeking an acquaintance whom all her prede-

cessors so anxiously avoided. But you will rejoice with me when I tell you that your fears are vain, and that I have been fortunate enough to discover the path they missed, and shall perhaps have the happiness of removing the foul stigma that rests on the Matron, and the ill repute the castle stands in. Nor have you the least reason to be uneasy on my account, even if I give birth to a daughter. I dare not tell you at present all I know ; and will only say, by way of comfort, that your Agnes, whose loss you once said you should not be able to survive, is safe, and hopes to live many happy years with her dear Ulrich.

“ I have taken possession of the apartments in the wing of the castle that your forefathers took such pains to render inaccessible, and by doing so, banished content and  
happiness



happiness from their family; for they immured the patroness, benefactress, and friend of it within these walls.

“ My present dwelling is a terrestrial paradise; for my windows command a view of Basle, the river Rhine, mountains of stupendous height, and the finest vallies that Nature ever produced. But I often turn my eyes from those beauteous scenes, and direct them the way that far-distant Hungary lies; and frequently, with the aid of fancy, dress a distant cloud or fleeting vapour in your form, and try to think it you.

“ It is not in my power to describe, nor can you imagine, how cheerful and pleasant this part of the castle is; therefore come, I beseech you to come as soon as you can, that I may have the pleasure of shewing you the finest part of your possessions. If love

be not powerful enough to urge, let curiosity force you to return.

“ All my visitors stare, and express their wonder when they are shewn into my rooms ; but even the satirical part of them, although they find fault with the antique appearance of the furniture and ornaments, are obliged to own that they exceed in richness and magnificence all the other apartments in the castle. Your ancestors, Ulrich, were spend-thrifts in the decorations of their wives' rooms ; I don't know what they think of my whim, as they most likely will call my changing my abode ; they say nothing to me about it : but I believe Jutta, who never comes to me without trembling, sighing, and crossing herself, is their confidant ; but as I do not wish to hear news, and detest gossiping, I always interrupt her whenever she begins on the subject.

“ Thus,

“ Thus, my dear Ulrich, my days glide on with very little variety. Detmond smiles at my courage, and approved of my resolution as soon as I informed him of it ; he is a worthy old man, and I am much indebted to him for his advice, which has been useful to me on several occasions since you left me ; for accustomed as I have ever been to a sedentary life, I am often in want of a guide to prevent my erring against the rigid rules of custom, and I know I can safely trust to his experience.

“ If I were not afraid of tiring your patience with accounts that might perhaps appear trifling to you, I would give you a description of my rooms and furniture, the satisfaction I experience in being in possession of them, how they recal scenes of former times to my mind, and the pleasure I feel in

comparing the past to the present. But my letter is too long already; I will therefore hasten to conclude with the assurance of my best and sincere wishes that the Almighty may watch over you, prosper your undertakings, and soon restore you to me. Farewell my dear Ulrich! my arms enfold you, my lips embrace you, my eyes shed tears on account of your absence, and my heart is with you. I remain

“Unalterably your

“AGNES OF PFYRT.”

“P. S.—If I am happy enough to present a daughter to you, and my life is spared, I hope, my dear Ulrich, you will not refuse to grant a favour that I intend asking of you.”

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It was impossible for Ulrich to conceal the emotion he felt whilst he was reading this letter—an emotion that he did not venture to ask himself the reason of. He was silent, and with a trembling hand folded up the letter, laid it upon the table, and was going to dispatch the messenger, who seemed to him a spy sent to watch his actions, when the latter took another letter out of his pocket, and presented it to the Count, whose eye glanced over the direction without being able to guess, by the almost unintelligible scrawl, who the writer could be:—it was a woman's hand, and he did not believe there was a female in his family who could write; and what business any other person could have with him, he could not conceive. After ruminating some time, he concluded it must come from his sister; but



as she had never written to him before, he could not imagine why she should do so now. The badness of the writing, however, soon convinced him he was mistaken; for he knew his uncle too well to think it possible that he would so entirely neglect his sister's education. If Ulrich had opened the letter, and looked at the signature at first, as he did afterwards, he might have saved himself the trouble of thinking; he was determined if that did not please him, not to read it, for he supposed it was from some meddling, impertinent friend who would hold forth a lecture on morality, and censure his conduct in leaving his home and wife so long; and subjects of that nature were odious to him. He was, however, agreeably surprised at seeing Jutta's name; and thinking the news she had to communicate might possibly

possibly be of a more pleasing nature than that his wife's letter contained, he determined to peruse it; and as soon as he had dismissed the messenger, he took up the letter, and with some difficulty deciphered the contents of it, which we, to satisfy our readers' curiosity, and to save them the trouble it occasioned Ulrich, will communicate to them in plainer terms than it was originally written in;—it was as follows:

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*“Honoured Lord,*

“By the manner of your snapping at poor old Jutta the last time you was here, you seemed to say that she was become a useless creature; but if that was your meaning, you are mistaken, for she is good for more than may be you think she is: and if she did not

take care, and watch what's going forward in the family, it would be bad for you, that's what she can tell you, as well as that it is high time for you to come home, if you wish to save my poor Lady's body and soul, and to snatch her out of Satan's jaws that are already opened to devour her. I therefore humbly entreat you, my honoured Master, to come home directly; do not delay a moment, for if you do, it will be too late. You don't know how intimate they are—I mean my poor dear Lady, and the wicked, diabolical Matron. Thank God, I have not seen her yet; but she has enticed the good innocent Lady into her snares, for she lives in the rooms that she haunts;—every thing in them is as clean and bright as silver, and their being so is owing to witchcraft, that's certain; for nobody went into the rooms before  
my

my Lady, and Rosa says there was not a bit of dirt or dust to be seen in them when she went in. Rosa sweeps and cleans them now ; I wonder at her courage, and wish she may have no reason to repent of her foolhardiness : but I am terribly afraid the evil spirit will give her a twist of the neck some time when she little expects it.

“ I hope the eleven thousand Virgins will intercede for you, and that God will forgive the heinous crime you have committed ; for if you had followed my advice, and hid the key, all this mischief would not have happened. All my fellow-servants, except Detmond and Rosa, are of my way of thinking, and wonder you suffer matters to go on as you do. I do all in my power to save your credit, by telling them you are ignorant of it ; and that I am certain, as soon as

you hear what has happened whilst you have been away, you will come back and put a stop to it as fast as you can. All that come to the castle look grave, shake their heads, and say—but I won't tell you what they say about you. Elderly persons who are informed of the secret, when they have an opportunity of speaking with me, mention the Matron with abhorrence;—I say they do so to me, for not one of them would on any account venture to do so in my Lady's hearing, knowing, as they do, how much she is in her power; for it is impossible for them to tell if the devil does not stand behind their chairs, ready to claw hold of any one that may happen to offend him. The young and thoughtless wonder at the fineness of the old witch's rooms; but when I inform them how they came to be so, they  
are



are frightened out of their wits, and never sit down without trembling, nor venture to touch any thing without crossing themselves, and saying their prayers.

“ Shall I tell you what my opinion is, and how I believe the affair will end ? It is, that we shall go on in the manner we do, till my Lady is brought to bed, and that as soon as the child is born, the old monster will, to the eternal disgrace of your family, and the terror of the whole world, throttle it as well as the mother !

“ Therefore hasten back to prevent the danger whilst it is in your power ;—nobody can do so except yourself. We shall have a terrible piece of work to do ; for I am sure Lucifer won't suffer the prey he thinks himself sure of, to be rescued from him without making all the opposition in his power.

But

But the sooner we set about it, the better it will be, and a little noise is better than a great one; for, in the first place, the uproar will only be in your own family, but, in the second, it will spread all over the world. I know I expose myself to great danger by informing you of these particulars; but let the consequences be what they may, I am determined to do my duty, and even venture my life to save my Lady's soul. My soul is secure from the power of the evil one, for I have kept my virtue pure and unspotted; and if the life of an innocent virgin, who has lived two-and-sixty years in the world with honour, can purchase her Lady's salvation, she will risk it on her account; and I shall die as I have lived,

“Honoured Lord,

“Your dutiful servant to command,

“JUTTA LOVERIGHT.”

“P. S.—I

“ P. S. —I would advise you to keep a watchful eye on your Chaplain ; for it is odd, very odd indeed, that he does not oppose my Lady in her strange going-on. The last Chaplain, who privately learned me to write, was a better kind of man ; he, I am sure, would not have remained silent on such an occasion as this. But, alas ! the whole world seems to be turned topsy-turvy ! ”

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“ Thou art a miserable scribe, upon my honour, Jutta,” said the Count, after he had spent almost an hour in developing the contents of the letter. “ But little as thou knowest of the art of writing, I am glad thou art not quite ignorant of it ; for without thy letter, my wife’s would have puzzled me a good deal. But I now know what to think

of the Matron's kindness; for I believe, in this affair, thy judgment is more to be depended on than that of Agnes."

The strongest proof the Count could give of his aversion and cruelty to his wife, was his leaving both the letters unanswered, and not even thinking of them again for some time. It is impossible to deny that when he left Agnes there was nothing he so much wished as her death; and any means that were likely to accelerate that event, and free him from his detested shackles, were welcome to him. It is therefore no wonder that the Matron's manner of ridding him of an obstacle that opposed his wishes, particularly as it removed every idea of suspicion from himself, must have been highly acceptable to him. But his heart was not yet sufficiently hardened in vice to allow him to be

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an eye-witness of it, and that was the principal reason of his absenting himself so long, and removing to such a great distance from home. Some casuists, who pretend to be deeply skilled in the knowledge of the human heart, say that he was afraid to stay, lest compassion might induce him to make use of the means in his power to save her life, and by doing so, deprive himself of the fruits of his dear-bought labour. But wicked as he was, I do not believe that thought ever entered his mind, nor that he at that time intended leaving Switzerland: yet it may certainly be placed to the account of Viria's fascinating charms, which bound his heart with such adamant chains as soon as he was assured of her love, that he was incapable of refusing any thing she proposed.

Ulrich



Ulrich thought proper to answer Agnes's letter some weeks after he had received it : he assured her in his reply, that her letter gave him much pleasure ; informed her that the affair which obliged him to leave home, was not terminated, nor could he yet fix the time when he should be able to return ; advised her to be on her guard, and not to place too implicit a confidence in her new friend, but to remember that spirits often sported with mortals to lead them to destruction ; begged she would take care of herself, patiently await his coming, and keep up the honour of his house. He said nothing about her change of apartments, and seemed entirely to have overlooked the request her postscript contained.

THE

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*THE DELIVERY.*

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DAYS and weeks succeeded each other with very little variation at Pfyrt Castle, till the time that was to decide Agnes's fate was near:—as it approached, Agnes's heart seemed lighter, Jutta's fears increased, the visitors at the castle became less frequent, the Chaplain's behaviour more unaccountable than ever, and Detmond was thoughtful, discontented, and uneasy. But why the same event operated in such a different manner on different minds, shall be explained to our readers.—Agnes's satisfaction was not only owing to the expectation of soon folding

folding her infant to her heart, and feeling a mother's joy—it was increased by the pleasing prospects that futurity promised ; and she impatiently anticipated the time, and counted the tardy moments till it arrived.

The Matron had promised to inform her of a number of circumstances after her delivery that she longed to know, and had told her that it would perhaps then be in her power to be serviceable to her. The only thing that oppressed her mind was the uneasiness she felt on her husband's account ; and if the Matron had not been her comforter, it is probable that the anxiety of her mind would have had a pernicious effect on her health. Jutta's terrors were caused by the Count neither returning, nor answering her letter, and the expectation of the dreadful events that she fancied would soon infallibly happen.

happen. In her opinion, it was impossible to prevent them entirely; but she thought the power of the evil spirit might be restrained by opposition: and the perverseness of those who had the power to oppose, without having the inclination to do so, was to her an unfathomable mystery. Jutta compared the present quiet that reigned in the family to the treacherous calm that usually precedes a storm, which she supposed would this time be so uncommonly violent as to destroy every thing it approached, and bear down all before it; and the description she gave of its Colossean strength and terrific fury, so frightened the guests, that to prevent their being involved in the general chaos that, according to Jutta's account, would soon take place, they, as the danger approached, left the castle.

Jutta

Jutta had hitherto not spoken to the Chaplain on the subject that engrossed her thoughts ; but she was surprised at the silence he observed, and his behaviour seemed to her every day more and more unaccountable. It is true he discharged the different duties of his function as usual—that is, he visited the Countess, and read mass every day, never failed making his appearance at table, and took all possible care of his own body, and the souls of those that were entrusted to his charge. He therefore did not seem an unaccountable being to any person except Jutta ; but that he did not endeavour to stem the torrent of mischief that was ready to overwhelm them, nor oppose the turbulent spirit, was to her a matter of astonishment. She had always, on account of the exemplary life he led, treated him with particular respect,



respect, and, notwithstanding his youth, had placed great confidence in him, for his discourse was to her both edifying and entertaining; he was neither a hypocrite nor fawning parasite, and spoke his mind as freely to the great as to the poor. Besides, he had always distinguished her, had often commended her piety, and had told her several times that she did not look near so old as she said she was. It will easily be supposed that compliments of such a nature made some impression on her heart, and that Jutta was the Chaplain's friend. The reason of her not speaking to him sooner, was owing to the high opinion she entertained of his superior knowledge and abilities, which made her suppose there was an impropriety in her mentioning to him what he was better informed of than herself, and that at the proper time

time he would oppose the Countess's intention with all his might. But finding that he continued silent when there was no longer any time to lose, she determined to speak to him. She therefore summoned up courage enough one morning to go into his room (for Jutta had some difficulty to prevail on herself to visit a man), and asked him if he were ignorant of some circumstances relating to the family that it was necessary for him to be informed of,—if he had never heard of a certain restless spirit that haunted some parts of the castle,—and if he did not know that the Countess was in the power of the malignant fiend, who would certainly destroy her?

The reverend Father took Jutta's hand, led her to a seat, presented a glass of wine and some biscuits to her, which, owing  
to

to his not having performed his morning devotion, he hoped she would excuse him pledging her in.

Jutta, although highly flattered by the polite reception she met with, did not forget the purport of her visit, and she repeated her questions as soon as it was in her power to do so. The Chaplain assured her that he had not only heard the different reports she mentioned, but that he had written to the Superior of his cloister concerning them, and that the answer he had received had removed his doubts, and made him perfectly easy on the Countess's account.—“Easy!” exclaimed Jutta, starting from her chair, and clasping her hands; “Ah! reverend Father, if you had seen as many dying mothers as I have, you would not talk in the manner you do. Pray listen to my advice, and save the

Countess! nobody can do so but you. She must die, indeed she must, if she is brought to bed in that room! And who knows if we that attend her, may not likewise be in the devil's power, and share the same fate!"

"Our trust is in the Almighty," replied the Priest; "his power, and the intercession of the blessed Saints will protect her and us."

"But for God's sake," said Jutta, "let us do what we can to save her; and if you are determined to do nothing else, at least write to the Count, and desire him to come home as soon as possible."

Father Francis, finding nothing improper in that request, promised to grant it, and his compliance encouraged her to ask a second favour, which was, that in case he did  
not

not receive an answer to his letter in a week, that he would himself go in quest of the Count, and not leave him till he had prevailed on him to return; but that he absolutely refused to do. Not a day passed but Jutta renewed her importunities. The Chaplain listened to her with patience; but as he neither informed her what his sentiments were, what the Countess said to him in confidence, nor adopted the measures she proposed, she usually left him in a discontented manner, and returned to her room, muttering these words, "His behaviour is more strange and unaccountable to-day than ever!"

What Father Francis had said to Jutta concerning the enquiries he had made about the spirit, was true; he had given himself a great deal of trouble to trace as far back as



possible the report, which he at first regarded as merely traditionary; had been at the pains of looking over a thousand worm-eaten manuscripts in the libraries of the neighbouring monasteries, particularly those whose Monks had been Confessors, or domestic Chaplains to the family of Pfyrt; and by those means he at last discovered that the perturbed spirit, that still at times wandered about the castle, and was known by the appellation of the Restless Matron, was of the family of Avenzburg; that her connexions and riches had greatly contributed towards raising the House of Pfyrt to its present degree of splendour; that she herself had lived a pious and retired life, had founded a Convent, and expended large sums on charitable purposes; that she died suddenly; and that the day after her interment,

ment, she appeared again in the castle, and was seen at different times by above a hundred persons, whose names were signed in the record; and they, as was attested by the Abbot, had all taken a sacramental oath that they had seen her.

This account, although it convinced Father Francis of the truth of some things that he expected, and perhaps wished to have found fabulous, did not alarm him on the Countess's account. He however determined to speak to her about this extraordinary circumstance, and desire her to inform him of every particular she knew that related to the Matron; and at the same time told her, that if she had even bound herself by a solemn oath to keep them secret, he, as her Confessor, was not included in it; and even if he were, it was less sinful to break than

keep such a promise. But Father Francis had no occasion to make use of threats to induce Agnes to comply with his desire; and the reason of the silence she had hitherto observed, was her not supposing the affair of consequence enough to mention to him; and her omitting it in her confessions, was owing to her not reckoning her intimacy with the Matron amongst the number of her sins. But the moment he interrogated her on the subject, she informed him of every circumstance she knew. Her account removed every apprehension from his mind, and was the reason of his paying but little attention to Jutta's remonstrances and advice.

Detmond's thoughtfulness, and the discontent his features frequently expressed, was not on his Lady's, but on his Lord's account: the large sums of money he frequently

quently sent for, the prodigious quantity of gold and jewels he had taken with him, and his not having his letters directed to the place where he knew he was, seemed to imply a mystery that he feared would, in the end, prove fatal to the domestic felicity of two persons that were equally dear to him. Besides, a traveller who was just returned from Nuremberg, whom Detmond had accidentally met with, had informed him of some things that made him shudder; and he was undetermined for some time if he should inform the Countess of what he had heard, or not: but reflecting on her situation, he determined on the latter, and prudently confined his doubts and fears to his own bosom. It was well he did; for had she known them, they would have rent her

mind with agonizing fears, and probably have cost her her life.

Ulrich's long-expected letter arrived at last ; but the contents of it were far from being pleasing to the Countess, for she was pained by the coldness of the style ; and the objections he made, although they were but slight, to her trusting herself in the Matron's power, were disagreeable to her, because she feared persevering in her intention, might be thought acting in disobedience to the commands of a man, whom it was her duty to obey ; and it was with difficulty that the Matron and Father Francis removed her scruples on that account, and restored some degree of tranquillity to her wounded mind. But when Jutta was informed that the Count was not expected home till after the Countess's delivery,



delivery, she stared aghast with horror, and wringing her hands, exclaimed, "Then the Lord have mercy on us!"—Agnes did all in her power to pacify her; but her endeavours were vain, and she continued her lamentations till the Countess, who was suddenly taken ill, desired her to call for assistance, as she was in great pain.

It was the pain of child-birth, which was probably accelerated by the violent emotion her mind had suffered on that and the preceding day. The state bed-chamber (a room that is well known to our readers), was by her orders prepared for her reception; and as soon as every thing was ready, she recommended herself to the protection of the Almighty, repaired to it, and about an hour after, was safely delivered of a daughter.

Jutta gave a loud shriek as soon as she heard the child was a girl; and instead of offering to help her Lady, she ran about the room, tearing her hair, and beating her breast, as if she were distracted. Every now and then she glanced a timid look towards the Countess, as if she expected to see her in the agonies of death. Nor was Agnes much less violently affected than Jutta; but the sensations she felt were of a different nature, for they were those of pleasure, as the Matron had several times expressed a wish that she might have a daughter. She ordered the child to be brought to her; and after looking at it with ineffable delight, she folded it to her bosom, and kissed it a number of times. At that moment the Matron appeared, and was visible to Jutta, and every person in the room; she was clad

in her robe of transcendent brightness, her silver girdle, and transparent veil, which flowed behind her in graceful folds, and swept the floor. She looked at the mother and child with a smile of approbation; and after waving her hand over their heads, as if she were giving them her blessing, she glided through the tapestry door, and left the Countess to the care of her astonished attendants and the Chaplain, who entered the room to offer his congratulations to the Countess, and bestow his benedictions on her and the child at the moment the Matron left it.

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*WERNER OF PFYRT.*

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IT was soon after the decease of Count Ulrich's mother that Werner of Pfyrt, who is no other than Lina's uncle, visited Pfyrt Castle, to convince himself, by ocular demonstration, of the truth of several reports that were circulated about the hereditary seat of his family. Werner, endowed by Nature with a speculative and active mind, had quitted the castle at an early period of life; for the manner of living there appeared to him too indolent and trifling to fill up the hours, and engage the attention of a rational man; and his being fortunate enough to  
become

become acquainted with Erasmus, a hermit who dwelt in a neighbouring wood, whose precepts had enlightened his mind, and enabled him to form such just conceptions of the duty he owed himself and others, he was convinced that a life merely spent in eating, drinking, sleeping, and amusements, did not deserve to be called living.

Werner had from his childhood preferred the study of nature to listening to the gossip's tales in the nursery. His principal amusement, as soon as he was out of his leading-strings, was to gather herbs, and dry flowers; and he was not a little proud of the curious collection of beetles and butterflies he was possessed of. It was in one of his rambles in pursuit of the latter, which carried him to a greater distance from home than he had ever been at before, that he  
discovered



discovered Erasmus's cell. He opened the door, and entered it without fear : there was nobody in it ; but seeing bread, milk, and honey upon the table, he seated himself, and satisfied the cravings of hunger. Erasmus returned whilst he was eating ; and perceiving with what appetite his guest relished his frugal meal, looked at him some time without being observed by him, with the most heartfelt pleasure.

Werner, at last raising his eyes from the bowl, saw Erasmus. " I beg your pardon," said the dauntless youth, without shewing any signs of fear or surprise, " for the theft I have committed, which I assure you was caused by hunger : but my father, the Count of Pfyr, will recompense you for what I have taken ; and I am sure he, as well as myself, will be greatly obliged to you, if  
you

you will shew me the way to our castle, for he, my mother, and all the family will be very uneasy at my absence. They won't mind my not coming home to dinner; but if I don't return in the evening, as I am almost afraid I shall not be able to do, they will be very unhappy indeed."

He rose from his seat as he pronounced the last words. Erasmus desired him to resume it, and seating himself near him, pressed him to continue his meal, and encouraged him to do so by the assurance that the distance from the castle was not so great as he imagined, as he would shew him a way, which was only known to himself, that would lead him home in half an hour; but that before he did so, he must promise not to mention it, nor his having seen him, to any body.

Werner's

Werner's joy at this discovery was unbounded, and his secrecy was so inviolate, that it procured him Erasmus's friendship; and so great was Werner's attachment to him, that he preferred his society to every other; and many hours were spent by him and his mentor in instructive discourse, that were wasted away at the castle in riot and dissipation. It was there that Werner imbibed the principles of philanthropy and industry that he afterwards exercised in a manner that did honour to his heart; and where his natural fondness for the study of botany, and the simple charms of a country life, took such deep root in his mind, that it was not in the power of time, nor the bustling scenes of life that he was afterwards engaged in, to eradicate or lessen.

Erasmus

Erasmus at last reminded his young friend that he had learned enough, and that it was time for him to practise what he knew. Werner, although pained by the thought of being separated from the man he so truly esteemed, was too well convinced of his unerring judgment to oppose his advice. He therefore, as soon as he had gained his parents' permission, bade farewell to his friend, and they parted—to meet no more!

Werner fought under the banners of Rudolph of Habsburg, was engaged in several of his wars, saw him crowned Emperor, and had eminently distinguished himself by his courage in battle, and his humanity to his vanquished enemies. In Ottokarn he had seen pride humbled, in Rudolph humility and piety rewarded. He had seen the Papal chair in its greatest splendour; in the Diets  
and

and Convocations—intrigues, confusion, and bribery; and in his dealings with the great—falsehood, arrogance, and mean self-interest. He had travelled through Britain, the Gallic Provinces, and Italy: in the latter country, the Sicilian-Vesper had given him an aversion to all worldly concerns, and fixed his determination to live in retirement.

Experience had taught him that the higher ranks of people were possessed of the means of making themselves happy, if they chose to make a proper use of what Fortune had given them; but to endeavour to lessen the misery of the lower class, was an object that he thought deserving the attention of those who had it in their power to do so; and to contribute towards it as much as he was able, he purchased a large estate



estate in Minsterdale, where the sole business of his life was to make others happy. His intention was crowned with success; and the grateful attachment of his tenants and dependants proved that if gratitude, as is asserted by some, had taken its flight from these lower regions, it still lived in the hearts of the inhabitants of that lonely valley.

Werner's first business, after he returned to his native country, was to visit his friend; but he found his cell empty, and he sought for him all over the wood in vain. He repeated his visit, and renewed his search several times with equal ill-success, for Erasmus was no where to be found.

Werner was seized with a lingering illness that confined him to his chamber several months; but as soon as he was able to go out,

out, he went to the wood, and as he approached the cell, he discovered, with inexpressible pleasure, the traces of human footsteps in the sand. He opened the gate, which was closed with a latch, rushed into it with the certainty of finding him whom he had so often sought for in vain ; but he was again disappointed. However, some food that stood upon the table, and some other circumstances, convinced him that Erasmus had been there lately, and that probably he would soon return ; and Werner's heart beat with tumultuous joy at the thought of soon beholding him again. Alas ! his wish was soon fulfilled ; for, happening to direct his eye towards a dark corner of the cell, which was his friend's usual place of repose, he saw him lying there. Werner approached him as gently as possible, for he fancied he was  
asleep ;

asleep; but his broken eyes, livid lips, and icy forehead soon convinced him of his mistake. The spirit of his friend was fled, and all that remained of him was the clod of dust that the soul cannot take with it in its ascent to the ethereal regions; nor would it probably, even if it could, wish to encumber itself with such a brittle fabric.

Werner bent over the corpse of his friend, pressed his clay-cold hand to his lips, whilst the tears, that he could not restrain, gushed from his eyes, and were a tribute that gratitude paid to the memory of departed worth. But he soon dried his tears; for his friend had taught him that it was wrong to mourn the dead as those without hope, and that a Christian would rather rejoice than give way to despondency, when those he loved are removed from a world of woe to a state of everlasting

everlasting bliss. Werner covered the corpse with green boughs, till the necessary preparations could be made for its interment ; then went to the altar, where Erasmus usually prayed, to perform his devotions, and found a letter laying upon it, directed to him. He tore it open with trembling haste, and read the following words :—

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“ I have several times observed with sorrow, when I returned to this place, that you, my friend, had visited it during my absence, and that you had not left a clue for me to trace your present abode. I went to Pfyrt Castle in hopes of finding you there, and my disappointment at not doing so was great, as I wished, and still wish you to do a charitable office, which, if your heart be not altered

tered since we parted, I know you will gladly perform.—It is to rescue an unfortunate infant from the power of those who unjustly hate and ill-treat her, and to contribute as much as lies in your power towards eradicating prejudices that you are most likely better informed of than I am. I recommend you to the immediate care and protection of the Almighty, and trust to your friendship for a grave.

“Your sincere and dying friend,

“ERASMUS.”

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This letter pointed out to him what he was to do, and he determined to leave no means untried to fulfil the desire of his departed friend. His first care was Erasmus's funeral: a confidential servant dug  
his



his grave, and a priest, in whose secrecy Werner knew he could confide, performed the obsequies ; and as soon as that was over, he hastened to the castle. He found his brother in deep mourning, and in great affliction for the loss of a wife he was uncommonly fond of ; and his nephew Ulrich, a tall, pert, and self-conceited lad, who took advantage of his father's sorrow and listlessness, did what he pleased, and ruled the whole family. Werner had been absent a number of years, and in that space of time many changes had taken place in it, and many events happened that he had not heard of, and others that he had only slightly heard mentioned, without being able to learn the particulars of them. Amongst the latter was an imperfect account of a sister, who was born after he had left the castle,

who

who was seduced, and forsaken, by a perfidious lover, whose baseness had deprived her of her senses ; and that she had found means to elude the vigilance of her keepers, had escaped through the garden one night, and had never been heard of since. Werner, who had always flattered himself that this account was groundless, or at least very much exaggerated, made particular enquiries about it, and, to his extreme regret, heard that every part of it was true. His humane heart was deeply wounded, and the tears that he had so lately dried, now flowed for his unfortunate sister. But his melancholy reflections were interrupted by the nurse bringing Lina into the room. The smiling infant stretched out her little arms towards him as soon as she saw him, as if she knew he would be her friend and deliverer ;

he clasped her to his bosom, and promised to be both.

Werner soon perceived that Lina was an object of aversion to every one except Detmond. Jutta neglected her, and the other servants, when they were out of their master's sight, thwarted, teased, and pinched her; but Detmond, when he could do so unobserved, would kiss and fondle her. The reason of his not expressing his affection publicly, was on Lina's account; for the sneers and reproaches he would have exposed himself to by it, he would have borne with indifference; but he had often remarked, that when he, or any other person, took notice of the child, it was treated more harshly by the rest: that provoked him, and was the reason of his concealing the fondness he really felt for the lovely infant.

Detmond's

Detmond's sentiments did not long escape Werner's notice: and one day, when they were alone, he informed him of his intention of taking Lina home with him.—“ Then you will do a good deed,” replied the steward; “ for I am afraid if she remains here, her fate will resemble your unhappy sister's. She, like Lina, was an object of universal hatred, because, like her, her birth was the cause of her mother's death; and scorned and ill-treated as she was, without a friend to advise or warn her, it is no wonder that she was an easy prey to the villain, who, under pretence of honourable courtship, ruined, and left her a prey to horror and despair! I had some suspicion of her pregnancy, and watched her as attentively as I could. The unfortunate hour of her delivery came, and the child was born, without having a witness

of its birth. I happily entered the room a few moments after, and saved the wretched parent from the guilt of murder, by snatching the child, and the knife that was held to its throat, and already stained with blood, out of her hands! As soon as I had disengaged the infant from her grasp, she covered her face with both her hands, and ran out of the room with a frantic wildness in her manner that made me shudder. When near the door, she dropped a ring, and as it fell, I perceived a drop of blood upon the stone! I stooped to take up the ring; but the Matron, whom you have doubtless heard of, entered the room at that instant, and prevented me, by doing so herself. She sighed, and said, after a long pause—' Dreadful fate! was not the measure of my woes full, that I must witness this scene?—Detmond, take



care of the child ; the mother is insane, and will never appear again !”

“ Where is the child ?” exclaimed Werner.

“ I will shew you its grave,” replied Detmond. “ Heaven loved it too well to leave it in a world where nothing but misery awaited it. It died soon after its birth.”

At that moment the door of the room they were in, suddenly flew open, and the Matron entered. She walked across the room with slow and solemn steps, and glided through the door that was opposite to that she came in at. She bowed to Werner as she passed him, and nodded her head in a familiar and friendly manner. He started at first, but soon recovering from his surprise, returned her salutation. His

often having seen her portrait, had rendered her features as familiar to him as if she had been an old acquaintance; besides, there was something so venerable and humane in her appearance, that instead of fear, she inspired every impartial beholder with awe and respect.

But Werner had another motive that made him desire to cultivate her acquaintance, and that was his wish to know his sister's fate; the Matron had, in some measure, charged herself with the care of her, and she was the only being to whom he could apply for information. He therefore sought every opportunity of seeing and speaking to her, but he sought them in vain; for although she passed him two or three times in the passage that led to his room, whenever he saw her, something seemed

to

to impede his utterance, and she was out of sight before he could summon courage enough to address her, or fix on the words that he thought proper to do so in. To engage his brother in a conversation that any ways alluded to her, was an impossibility; for the bare mention of her name always put him into the most furious rage, and he absolutely refused to let the rooms be opened, although Werner repeatedly assured him, upon his honour, that no person, except himself, should enter them. But neither entreaty nor persuasion were powerful enough to prevail on him to do so; and his brother found him inflexible in every thing except one, and that was giving his willing assent to his taking Lina away with him. Indeed the proposal gave him the most visible satisfaction; and so

often having seen her portrait, had rendered her features as familiar to him as if she had been an old acquaintance; besides, there was something so venerable and humane in her appearance, that instead of fear, she inspired every impartial beholder with awe and respect.

But Werner had another motive that made him desire to cultivate her acquaintance, and that was his wish to know his sister's fate; the Matron had, in some measure, charged herself with the care of her, and she was the only being to whom he could apply for information. He therefore sought every opportunity of seeing and speaking to her, but he sought them in vain; for although she passed him two or three times in the passage that led to his room, whenever he saw her, something seemed

to

to impede his utterance, and she was out of sight before he could summon courage enough to address her, or fix on the words that he thought proper to do so in. To engage his brother in a conversation that any ways alluded to her, was an impossibility; for the bare mention of her name always put him into the most furious rage, and he absolutely refused to let the rooms be opened, although Werner repeatedly assured him, upon his honour, that no person, except himself, should enter them. But neither entreaty nor persuasion were powerful enough to prevail on him to do so; and his brother found him inflexible in every thing except one, and that was giving his willing assent to his taking Lina away with him. Indeed the proposal gave him the most visible satisfaction; and so



impatient was he to get rid of her, that he did not even press his brother to prolong his visit.

The night previous to Werner's leaving the castle, the Matron appeared to him as he was preparing to retire to rest; she made a graceful obeisance as she entered, and said, "I thank thee for taking charge of Lina; but I hope thou wilt not refuse returning here with her when I inform thee that it is proper to do so. Take this ring, keep it till Lina's sixteenth birth-day, and then give it her. As soon as thou perceivest that this spot of blood is removed, thou art to return without delay.—Why dost thou look so doubtful? From me thou hast nought to fear; I am thy friend, not thy enemy."—So saying, she left the room.

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If Werner were undetermined at that time whether to obey her commands, or not, he hesitated still more when the time arrived; and it is uncertain if the spot of blood being effaced from the ring would have prevailed on him to do so, if the tempest that threatened destruction to his plants and flowers, had not proved a stern admonition.

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*THE FAMILY VAULT.*

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THE intimacy between the Matron and Agnes was uncommonly great, and even Jutta had sometimes the pleasure of seeing her. As several weeks had elapsed since the event she so much dreaded, and the Countess, as well as the child, were in perfect health, Jutta perceived her error, and owned it would have been better if the Matron had been consulted sooner. Her respect therefore increased every time she saw her; and instead of avoiding her presence, she intentionally placed herself in her way, and  
never

never failed making her a low curtsy whenever they met.

But Agnes was still unacquainted with the particulars she longed to know. She had several times hinted her wish to the Matron without her attending to it; and once when she ventured to remind her of her promise, she silenced her by saying she must have patience till she was quite well, for she was still too weak to hear the tale of horror she had to relate, without endangering her health. But one night, after they had conversed on a number of subjects relating to the family, the subterraneous parts of the castle, and among the rest, the family vault happened to be mentioned, which, by the Matron's account, seemed to Agnes to be a place of vast extent.—“ You describe it so particularly, my dear mother,” said she,

“that I am almost tempted to think you saw it whilst you were alive?”

“Alas! I did,” replied the Matron.—  
“May no one ever see it again in the manner I did! My marriage was even unhappier than thine, for thou hast a daughter to appease thy husband’s wrath; had that blessing been granted me, I should not have been the wretched, miserable being I now am. My marriage was an interested one, concluded between avaricious parents, who did not consult their children’s affections; and I, whose only wish it was to devote myself to God, and spend my life in the calm tranquillity of a Convent, was forced to give my hand to a man I had never seen till after the marriage contract was signed—a man I did not, could not love. I bore him seven sons; but my husband wished

to



to have a daughter, to fulfil a vow he had made: but his wish was not granted. He received his first child with affection, the second with indifference, the third with anger;—but the four others—thou Agnes, who art a mother, can judge how a mother's heart must have been wounded to hear him curse the hour of their birth! It was hard, very hard indeed! His malediction rested on their devoted heads; they all died untimely deaths! I was pregnant again; and he swore a dreadful oath, too dreadful for me to repeat, that if he were disappointed this time, he would inflict the severest punishment on me that he could devise. I will not pain thee with a repetition of the agonies I suffered, nor how I wearied Heaven with my prayers that what he desired, might happen. The agonies of death

death are trifling, compared to those I suffered when the time of my delivery came. Let me hasten over the dreadful period ;—the child was a girl ; but its death preceded its birth, and was most likely caused by the anxiety of my mind. My husband's rage resembled madness ; he cursed his unhappy wife, who lay trembling in her bed, more dead than alive !—cursed her with the dreadful curse, that for her sake all the mothers of his family who were delivered of daughters, should die in child-bed ; and that every daughter, who was the cause of her mother's death, should be seduced, miserable, cast-out, and condemned by her family ! My blood chilled in my veins, and my senses forsook me ;—happy, happy would it have been if I had never recovered them ! I remained some  
hours

hours in a state of insensibility ; but I awoke at last to horrors—horrors that are unutterable !

“ It was midnight ; I heard the clock strike twelve. I opened my eyes, and raised my hand : the impenetrable darkness I was in, terrified me. My hand, as I lifted it up, struck against something hard, that fell down as I touched it, with a hollow rumbling noise. I raised myself up, and looked round me : I was clad in a shroud ; a coffin, that was placed in the midst of innumerable others, was my bed ; a silver lamp, that afforded a faint glimmering of light, was suspended by a chain in the midst of the vault—I was buried alive!”—

This

This account was too dreadful for Agnes's weak spirits to bear; she gave a faint scream, and sinking back upon the couch, fainted.

END OF VOL. I.



